



## **Nottingham City Council Corporate Parenting Board**

**Date:** Monday, 15 November 2021

**Time:** 2.00 pm

**Place:** Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG

**Councillors are requested to attend the above meeting to transact the following business**

**Director for Legal and Governance**

**Governance Officer:** Emma Powley

**Direct Dial:** 0115 876 4891

- |           |   |         |
|-----------|---|---------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>Apologies for absence</b>  |         |
| <b>2</b>  | <b>Declarations of Interests</b>  |         |
| <b>3</b>  | <b>Minutes</b><br>To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on the 20 September 2021.  | 3 - 8   |
| <b>4</b>  | <b>Independent Visitors Report</b><br>Report of Project Manager, CGL  | 9 - 14  |
| <b>5</b>  | <b>Advocacy Service Report</b><br>Report from Gabriel Hall (Children's Society)   | 15 - 28 |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>Complaints Service Report</b><br>Report of Director of Children's Integrated Services  | 29 - 36 |
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Independent Reviewing Officer Service Annual Report</b><br>Report of the Interim Director for Children's Integrated Services | 37 - 46 |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy</b><br>Report of the Interim Director for Children's Integrated Services           | 47 - 84 |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>2021/22 - Q2 Performance Report</b><br>Report of Interim Director for Children's Integrated Services                         | 85 - 92 |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Children in Care Update</b>  |         |

Verbal update from the Engagement and Participation Lead Officer

**11 Feedback from themed discussion with CiC Council – Homes and Housing**

Engagement and Participation Lead Officer to lead

**12 Work Plan**

Report of the Chair

93 - 94

**13 Date of next meeting**

Date of the next meeting: 17 January 2022.

If you need any advice on declaring an interest in any item on the agenda, please contact the Governance Officer shown above, if possible before the day of the meeting

Citizens are advised that this meeting may be recorded by members of the public. Any recording or reporting on this meeting should take place in accordance with the Council's policy on recording and reporting on public meetings, which is available at [www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk](http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk). Individuals intending to record the meeting are asked to notify the Governance Officer shown above in advance.

In order to hold this meeting in as Covid-safe way as possible, all attendees are:

- asked to maintain a sensible level of social distancing from others as far as practically possible when moving around the building and when entering and leaving the meeting room. As far as possible, please remain seated and maintain distancing between seats throughout the meeting.
- strongly encouraged to wear a face covering when entering and leaving the meeting room and throughout the meeting, unless you need to remove it while speaking to enable others to hear you. This does not apply to anyone exempt from wearing a face covering.
- make use of the hand sanitiser available and, when moving about the building follow signs about traffic flows, lift capacities etc

## Nottingham City Council Corporate Parenting Board

**Minutes of the meeting held in the Ground Floor Committee Room, Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on Monday 20 September 2021 from 2:00pm to 3:33pm**

### Membership

#### Present

Councillor Cheryl Barnard (Chair)  
Councillor Maria Joannou (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Nicola Heaton  
Councillor Georgia Power  
Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos  
Councillor Maria Watson

#### Absent

Councillor Jay Hayes  
Councillor Phil Jackson

### Colleagues, partners and others in attendance

Mary-Anne Cosgrove	-	Head of Children's Regulated Services
Sam Flint	-	Children in Care Police Officer
Tajinder Madahar	-	Head of Extensive and Specialist Services
Adrian Mann	-	Governance Officer
Treza Mann	-	Interim Service Manager for CIC and LCS
Natalie Pink	-	Case Manager, Youth Offending Team
Jon Rea	-	Engagement and Participation Lead Officer
Audrey Taylor	-	Service Manager, Fostering and Adoption

### 22 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Jay Hayes	-	Self-isolating
Councillor Phil Jackson	-	Council business
Catherine Underwood	-	Corporate Director for People
Helen Watson	-	Interim Director of Children's Integrated Services

### 23 Declarations of Interests

None.

### 24 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2021 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

### 25 Care Leavers' Views on Semi-Independent Living

Jon Rea, Engagement and Participation Lead Officer, provided an update on the work being done with children in care preparing for independent living. The following points were discussed:

- (a) engagement has been carried out with children in care in preparing for independent living. This has formed part of the 'Have Your Say' survey, and there has been wider discussion relating to educational opportunities and mental and physical health and wellbeing. Appropriate housing is a vital element of independent living, so the Service is supporting Commissioning and Procurement colleagues in the production of a tender document for the development of more semi-independent living accommodation in the city;
- (b) work is being carried out to ensure that the voice of children in care is brought into the tender process, and discussions have been held with 17 care leavers to set out what is important to them about semi-independent living, what facilities and support they need, and where the accommodation is located in the city. Five of these young people then provided input into a question on the tender form asking providers to set out what positive provision they would be able to bring for care leavers. The successful provider must create the right environment for care leavers to thrive in independent living;
- (c) education support for preparing for the move to independent living is valued, including learning on how to manage a home and household bills, and in claiming available benefits. Care leavers moving into semi-independent accommodation can be concerned about maintaining friendships if they move to a different area, and they would benefit from help in understanding the local area in which they will live;
- (d) care leavers moving into independent living should be consulted and provided with support in overcoming the barriers to transitioning to full independence. Service staff need to know the areas into which care leavers move, and be careful not to push their own values onto the young people with whom they have a relationship. Wherever possible, care leavers should be supported by the same Service staff, to ensure consistency of the relationship;
- (e) the Children in Care Council meeting in October will discuss what 11-15 year-old care leavers want from their independent living placements, and the next steps. The Council has been meeting virtually during the Coronavirus pandemic, but it is hoped that it will soon be possible to return to face-to-face meetings. Social group-type feedback work is important to grow the confidence of children in care and develop creative thinking. The Service must listen and be as responsive as possible, so that every voice is heard. Board members are very welcome to join and participate in Council meetings;
- (f) the Service is working with regional colleagues on a 'home is not a placement' initiative, to seek to make the language around children in care less formal and institutionalised;
- (g) close support for care leavers in preparing and transitioning into semi-independent living is vital, including ensuring their safety and wellbeing. As such, children in care must be listened to very carefully in approaching this significant stage in their lives. The most vulnerable young people will meet the criteria for transitioning to Adult Services for ongoing support, but great care is required for the children who do not meet these criteria, but nevertheless could be at risk. As

such, it is vital that these young people are consulted with closely on developing an independent living strategy that will be successful.

The Board noted the update.

## **26 Reducing Offending Behaviour for Children in Care**

Natalie Pink, Case Manager in the Youth Offending Team, and Sam Flint, Children in Care Police Officer, presented a report on the published data for 2019/20 on reducing offending behaviour within the children in care population, and the activity of the Children in Care Police Officers to reduce offending and safeguard children in care. The following points were discussed:

- (a) joint funding has been put in place by the Council's Social Care Service and Nottinghamshire Police to help address offending behaviour concerning children in care. For 2019/20, this work achieved the maintenance of a 3% offence rate for children in care;
- (b) a multi-agency protocol for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to reduce the criminalisation of children in care was adapted in 2017. This is being reviewed in light of the National Protocol on Reducing Unnecessary Criminalisation of Looked-After Children and Care Leavers 2018, but there has been some delay in signing off the updated protocol as a national consultation was required;
- (c) a Children in Care Arrest Screening process is in place to proactively divert children in care from prosecution where appropriate, and this is now embedded within the Youth Justice Service. A screening tool has been implemented by Nottinghamshire Police so that all incident reports from children's homes are monitored at the earliest possible opportunity, directly from the control room, to allow timely intervention by the Children in Care Police Officers to keep children in care out of the criminal justice system, wherever possible;
- (d) Practitioner Forums had been held to promote best practice in the sector, and these received good feedback. However, it was not possible to replicate these large-scale meetings effectively during the Coronavirus pandemic. Information packages on key topics have been produced in the interim, and ways of enabling agencies to share information virtually have been introduced. A video package has also been developed for all new police recruits, to develop their understanding and skills for working with children in care;
- (e) three police officers are liaising with care homes and semi-independent accommodation providers to implement the protocol, identify indicators of exploitation and promote the use of tools to safeguard young people, including on how providers identify and report issues to the police in an effective way. The Concerns Network Meeting is used to enable over 20 agencies to meet to share intelligence and implement disruption tactics, though this has been unable to meet in person during the pandemic. However, an associated e-bulletin is sent out every two months to participating agencies and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, to collect and circulate system-wide intelligence that would not necessarily be reported to the police. Due to this City- and County-wide, multi-agency and whole-team approach, officers can respond to potential

exploitation cases very rapidly, and regular and effective disruption measures are in place;

- (f) the Violence Reduction Unit is currently funding a girls-only boxing club, which is an extremely valuable project that helps young women to support each other as a team and grow their self-esteem;
- (g) the Board noted that the work carried out to avoid the early criminalisation of children in care is vital, and that the development of more projects like the girls' boxing club is important and beneficial;
- (h) the Board considered that the joint protocol on reducing offending behaviour is highly important, though it raised concerns regarding how the protocol referred to offences in some areas. It recommended that the language used to describe offences and offending behaviour is appropriate and up to date, and that it is emphasised that children in care are generally victims of crime and exploitation, rather than perpetrators. It noted that the document available currently is the 2017 version of the protocol, so it requested that the revised version is circulated to Board members before a final version is signed off.

The Board noted the report.

## **27 Foster Carer Recruitment and Retention**

Audrey Taylor, Service Manager for Fostering and Adoption, presented a report on the recruitment activity for new foster carers, and the retention of existing carers in the Fostering Service. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the number of children in care is increasing significantly. Most of these children are in foster care, and work is carried out to ensure that foster placements are with in-house foster carers whenever possible, rather than children being placed through an agency. The Service has achieved its target in this regard and is doing well in comparison to many other Local Authorities. Children in care who are not recording as being with foster carers may be going through formal Care Proceedings;
- (b) so far, 15 new carers have been approved and there are a further 15 applicants going through the process, and the appointments panel capacity has been increased to hear applications within the right timescale. There have been several recent resignations and de-registrations of foster carers, but a number of these carers have been 'on hold' during the Coronavirus pandemic and have now made the decision they no longer wish to continue to foster;
- (c) wherever possible and appropriate, the Courts favour placing children with family or family friends. Connected persons are assessed by the Service in the same way as foster carers, and the same level of support is provided to them, with visits carried out on a monthly basis. However, the Coronavirus pandemic has delayed Court processes significantly, so there are currently more children than normal in temporary arrangements, which have lasted for longer periods of time;

- (d) work is underway to recruit more carers, to increase the in-house provision. However, there is no longer an internal recruitment consultant role, so different ways are being explored to manage the recruitment process effectively. Recruitment activity is being pursued online and through social media, and risk assessments are being carried out for the reintroduction of face-to-face processes. Whether the Council's Communications Team is able to provide support for the recruitment process is also being explored. During April and May, a leaflet drop was carried out with support from the ward councillors for Bestwood, Bulwell and Bulwell Forest, to raise awareness of foster caring;
- (e) a joint collaboration is taking place with the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership to compile a video to promote fostering and pool resources across the region. Partnership work continues with 100 Homes / City Prayer to provide support for fostering in the Christian community, and there is an ongoing focus on community support. A 'Supported Lodgings' scheme is also being carried out in partnership with Barnardo's, which is designed to support the transition of young people in care into adulthood;
- (f) during the Coronavirus pandemic, it has been necessary to carry out the Skills to Foster training online. Therapeutic parenting training has been commissioned and has contributed to applicants developing new parenting strategies for fostered children. The feedback from the training has been positive, and face-to-face sessions will largely resume when it is safe to do so. A medical assessment is a statutory requirement for any prospective foster carer, but there have been considerable difficulties in arranging and completing these during the pandemic due to a lack of capacity amongst GPs, and an effective solution is still being sought;
- (g) there have been some staffing challenges in providing the right level of support for foster carers, so it has been necessary to bring in external social workers on a temporary basis. A buddy system is in place to pair new foster carers with more experienced ones. A Therapeutic Support Team is in place to support carers, and a new clinical psychologist has been appointed. However, carers gain a great deal from peer support and networking at face-to-face meetings and training, which has been very difficult to achieve during the pandemic;
- (h) the training programme for 2021 has been reviewed and updated, and all training courses will be run virtually apart from the paediatric first aid course. Currently, only mandatory training is being provided as there have been some challenges in the training team in service delivery. Bespoke training courses for more complex cases will be rolled out later in the year, though it may be necessary for these to be provided externally. The Service pays for all carers to be members of the Fostering Network, where they can receive the latest information and access the services of the Network's Advice and Mediation Worker. Support is also available to carers through the Virtual School;
- (i) it is important that the training and support provided to in-house foster carers is competitive, relative to the offer from the independent sector. As such, it is vital to engage with and listen to carers, to be clear on what it is that they need;

- (j) the Board noted that some people who are interested in becoming foster carers cannot do so because they do not have a spare bedroom, which is a requirement. The Service should work closely with Nottingham City Homes on potential solutions to seek to ensure that this is not a barrier to those who want to become a foster carer if possible, but this is relatively complex work.

The Board noted the report.

## **28 Work Plan**

The Chair presented the Board's proposed work plan for the 2021/22 municipal year.

The Board requested that the data relating to Coronavirus vaccinations rates for children in care is included within the 'Health of Children in Care' report scheduled for the meeting on 17 January 2022, if possible.

## **29 Future Meeting Dates**

- **Monday 15 November 2021 at 2:00pm**
- **Monday 17 January 2022 at 2:00pm**
- **Monday 21 March 2022 at 2:00pm**

**Corporate Parenting Committee  
Nottingham City Independent Visitor Service  
Annual Report  
April 2020 – March 2021**

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**1. Introduction to the Nottingham City IV Service**

The Change Grow Live Nottingham Independent Visitor Service is a partnership between Change Grow Live and Nottingham City Council Children Services Department. The project has been funded by the Council since October 2017. During 2020/2021 the project continued to provide Independent Visitors to look after children and care leavers.

### i. Independent Visitors

Change Grow Live recruit and train volunteers from local communities to be independent visitors where children and young people are placed. Independent visitors may be matched with a child or young person up to 18 years or beyond if the young person has additional needs. In 2020/2021 this included recruiting and training volunteers in locations such as Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, and Yorkshire. Independent visitors may be matched with a child/young person where there is little or no contact with their birth family or it is thought to be in their best interest. It is voluntary participation and therefore the child/young person must consent to the referral being made – starting every relationship in this way means that the child/young person has full agency.

An independent visitor provides support monthly, with the offer of a telephone call or correspondence offered at the start of a new match relationship to allow for relationships to develop. The aim is to provide a trusted adult, independent of the local authority with whom the child/young person may develop a lasting, stable and trusting relationship. During the visits the pair may share an interest, hobby or go on an outing together. During recruitment we encourage applicants to reflect; are they able to commit for a minimum duration of 2 years?

## 2. The Independent Visitor Service

### i. Young People Figures 2020/2021

<b>Referrals &amp; Matching - Independent Visitor Service</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Young people referred to the service</i>	<b>11</b>
<i>Young people newly matched</i>	<b>11</b>
<i>Year-end on-going relationships in Nottingham City</i>	<b>26</b>
<i>Referrals withdrawn due to change in circumstances</i>	<b>11</b>
<i>Number of matches ended 20-21</i>	<b>9</b>
<i>Young people awaiting an IV at year end</i>	<b>9</b>

A match may end, or a referral withdrawn on account of a young person reaching 18 yrs., moving area, returning home to family, outgrowing the service or a change in personal circumstances for the volunteer

## Young People Demographics

<b>Young People within Nottingham city Independent Visitor (including waiting list)</b>	
Male	<b>20</b>
Female	<b>11</b>
Identify as other	<b>3</b>
SEN	<b>15</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
White British	<b>26</b>
Mixed white British	<b>2</b>
Black British	
Asian British	
Other	<b>6</b>

Change Grow Live Independent Visitor Service helps to integrate children and young people into their local community, reducing isolation by being a part of something. Drawing volunteers from the local area helps build relationships, encourages compassion and in turn improves community cohesion.

Children and young people are at the centre of our project we are passionate about providing the support they need. Upon receipt of a referral, project staff conduct an initial assessment with the child/young person to obtain a clear understanding of their wishes and an insight into their expectations. Once a match is found the relationship is reviewed by our project staff twice a year as minimum to explore how the relationship is developing. We have several examples where volunteers have been matched for many years and some have continued to support their young person even when the young person has moved out of their local area.

### ii. Independent Visitor Activities

During 2020/21 young people and their independent visitors have taken part in a range of activities, together they plan how to make the best of their budget. This year it has been very challenging, but the young people have been amazing at accepting the changes.

During Covid these activities moved to virtual, or occasional socially distanced visits in the local area. The young people and their Independent Visitors enjoyed a variety of TEAMS meetings: Amazon deliveries – games, paints, crafts, and lots more. Movie nights, pizza's, pamper sessions have also been shared. Not forgetting, walks & bike rides outdoors. Pokémon Go has also made an appearance.

### iii. Service Feedback – Independent Visitor

#### Foster Carers

*About their 20 year-old YP with additional learning needs commenting on the IV who has been supporting for 3 years and 6 months:*

"IV is very reliable. They have a great relationship. Sometimes he is grumpy but never doesn't want to go out. She soon turns that around and I know he enjoys it. During lockdown IV kept in regular contact and went for local walks. "

*About their 16 year-old YP with a health conditions commenting on the IV who has been supporting for 6 months:*

"It's nice for her to have someone who is closer to her age taking her out. She really enjoys doing out with her IV. I can see the impact on her, since having an IV I have noticed an increase in confidence and independence.

#### Young People

*When asked what's the best thing about having an IV, YP said:*

"I enjoy doing different things"

"I always look forward to them coming"

"I am not stuck in the house all the time"

"She's kind... fun... easy to talk to."

*When asked in a recent survey "would you recommend having an Independent visitor to others" all YP completed answers .... Yes!*

## 3. Communication

### i. Commissioners

The project has been providing a service in partnership with Nottingham City Council since October 2017: during that time we have built a strong positive relationship with professionals in a variety of different roles/teams.

Joint quarterly meetings are held with our partners from the local authority where monitoring information is scrutinised, and case studies shared. Partnership working is an opportunity to highlight strengths and identify solutions should improvement or development be required.

### ii. Networking

We network with Community Action in Nottingham City who share opportunities regarding training, grants and networking events. Aswell as Community action in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. We attend volunteer recruitment events around the Midlands at Universities, such as Derby, Nottingham Trent, Sheffield Hallam.

## 4. Children and Young People

Change Grow Live recognise that participation is key to our success in 2020-21, we:

- Previous years invited children and young people (with their independent visitor), to participate in our training; sharing their own experience with potential volunteers is invaluable. However, due to pandemic, and moving the IV training courses online, this has not been practical or possible, though we are not considering re-instating this in whatever form might take.
- We keep in touch with young people both awaiting a match and those already matched twice a year to obtain their feedback about our service.

### i. Best Practice

**Referrals Independent Visitor Service:** Change Grow Live accept referrals from social workers based on criteria fixed by our funders (young person subject to a care order, has limited or no contact with their birth family and it is considered to be in their best interest). To engage with the service, it is critical that the young person is in agreement with the referral being made. If we are approached by other stakeholders, we redirect to the social worker, they have overview and responsibility for the care plan. Once a referral is received, project staff consider suitability. Gatekeeping is essential as occasionally other services are more appropriate such as advocacy or CAMHS. Once accepted staff visit the child/young person to complete a person-centred initial assessment.

**Practice:** Change Grow Live are members of the National Independent Visitor Network (NIVN), meeting quarterly with other providers to share best practice, ideas, experience and forging positive links. We adhere to the National Standards for the provision of Independent Visitors. We are members of Article 39 raising awareness about the promotion of the protection of children living in institutional settings in England. We attend specialist training delivered by third party organisations to improve our skills and update our knowledge.

**Recording Data:** We follow GDPR regulations with regard to data protection i.e. we only collect data (information) if we need it, keep the data we hold up-to-date, only hold data as long as is as necessary, make sure we share data safely and appropriately. We let staff, volunteers and service users know what we are doing to keep their data safe.

Confidential information, including referrals received via Egress, is securely stored on our data management system CRiis. We store all relevant information including basic details, contacts with professionals, risk assessments, contact sheets from volunteers and monitoring information. Only project staff and higher-level management have access. Regular alerts are in place to ensure checks and responses are completed in a timely manner ensuring continuous monitoring.

**Independence:** We are an independent service and strive to ensure the child/young person using our services understand that. Training, Initial assessments, match meetings and Independent Visitor sessions do not take place on Council premises. It is important that children and young people understand volunteers gift their time simply because they care.

**Volunteers:** Volunteers are trained under the Change Grow Live Safer Volunteer Recruitment (SVR) process a commitment to anti-discriminatory law, policy and practice. SVR is a seven-stage process including; application form, first interview, classroom training, enhanced DBS check, references, assessment pack and pre-commencement interview. Volunteers are not permitted to meet with a child/young person until all stages are complete.

**Confidentiality:** Independent visitors choose with their young person the activity they wish to engage in within budget, sometimes saving for more expensive trips. They share plans with project staff. Project staff complete necessary risk assessments and seek permissions before any activity is undertaken. The independent visitor returns a contact sheet and expense form to project staff – stored on CRiIS. Information is not shared with third parties unless a safeguarding situation occurs. Similarly, advocates respect the privacy of the young person they support, agreeing with them an advocacy action plan, the young person remains in control of the relationship at all times and information is not shared with third parties without permission of the young person.

## ii. COVID-19

During the last year, Government guidance prompted adaptations to working methods to enable the Nottingham Independent visitor Service to continue operation during the lockdown period. All direct face to face work was suspended in order to minimise risk to staff, volunteers and young people. Communication via phone calls, text message, emails, and video calls have continued.

Prior to the pandemic, Change Grow Live would carry out face-to-face interviewing of volunteers, with successful applicants trained in groups of 10 or 12 in central locations or at our main office base within Derby City. As of March 2020 that was all suspended and Change Grow Live had to quickly adapt their processes; initial interviews were carried out over the telephone; Trainers adapted their paper based training to provide online training, and after the implementation of Microsoft Teams capabilities the Independent Visitor volunteer training restarted in June 2020.



**Nottingham**  
**City Council**

# **Independent Advocacy**

Annual Report: October 2020 to September 2021

Area Manager: Gabriel Hall

Service Manager: Alison Smith

## Introduction

The Children's Society is commissioned by Nottingham City Council to deliver an independent and confidential Advocacy Service for all Children in their care. The Advocacy Service promotes children's rights and provides advocacy in line with the Local Authority's statutory duty.

The Children's Society's practice is underpinned by the National Standards for the provision of Children's Advocacy Services (2002).

The service aims to empower children and young people ensuring their rights are respected and that their views and wishes are heard in decision-making processes. The service provides independent;

- Information
- Advice
- Advocacy
- Representation
- Support

The Advocacy process is led by children and young people and advocates follow the core principles below;

- *Advocates work for children and young people and no one else.*
- *Advocates value and respect children and young people and challenge discrimination.*
- *Advocates support children in care to understand what is happening to them and to ensure they have a voice in decisions made about them.*
- *Advocates help children and young people to raise issues and concerns about things they are unhappy with. This includes making informal and formal complaints under section 26 of the Children's Act 1989.*

Advocacy for young people is based on the principle that all young people have a right to be involved in the decisions that affect their lives. The distinctive nature of advocacy is that it is led by the views and wishes of young people and always uses a child-centered approach. Advocates act on the permission and instructions of young people even when these are not the advocate's view of the young person's best interests.

## **Nottingham City Advocacy Service**

Advocacy services are available for children and young people up to the age of 18 years or up to 25 years for those with a disability or in higher education. The Children's Society provides a free and confidential phone messaging service (available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week) for children and young people to make contact with the advocacy service.

## **Residential Visiting Advocacy**

The Children's Society is contracted to provide Residential Visiting Advocacy to all children and young people in residential care, at a minimum of once every twelve weeks. This includes all residential homes that are Local Authority maintained, private and secure accommodation throughout the UK.

## **Issue Based Advocacy**

The Children's Society provide issue based advocacy representing children and young people who have specific concerns that they wish to be supported with. This work has no specific time frames however the advocates aim to resolve issues quickly. Once resolved the work is closed and if young people have subsequent issues these are raised as new pieces of work.

The services aims to achieve:

1. Young people feel that their views, wishes and opinions are listened to
2. Young people feel confident to speak out and self-advocate
3. Young people understand their rights and the decisions made about their lives
4. Young people have improved wellbeing
5. Young people have more control over the decisions made in their lives

## **Non- Instructed Issue Based Referrals**

The advocate's role is to ensure that the young person is at the center of all decisions being made about them. If a young person is unable to communicate their views, then the advocate will make it clear that they do not know what a young person wants, and that they are therefore using a non-instructed approach.

The non-instructed advocacy referral primarily involves observation, questioning, information gathering and being clear on what rights the young person has. In practice non-instructed advocacy usually involves a combination of these techniques to ensure the rights

of the young person are upheld, decisions are made in a child-centered way and, as far as possible, the young person has some input into the decisions affecting their lives. First and foremost it has to be the needs of the young person that dictate the form of advocacy used.

It is important to keep an open mind and consider all forms of communication that a young person may be able to use to instruct, for example symbols/signing & PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System – using cards with pictures to express wishes and feelings). This may involve working with key professionals involved in the young person's life to gain a better understanding about what the young person wants to communicate

## Independent Persons

An Independent Person is provided to all eligible children and young people subject to current Secure Accommodation Orders. As an Independent Person, the Advocate is to be an active member of the decision making panel, which decides whether the criteria for keeping a young person in secure accommodation continue to apply, ensuring that children's rights and entitlements are upheld and that decisions are appropriate

## Promoting the service & networking

To raise awareness of the Advocacy service The Children's Society has produced promotional flyers which have been distributed across Children in Care services including social work teams, residential units, semi-independent providers, secure accommodation and foster carers networks. To support an understanding of advocacy provision the service manager has attended a range of meetings and networking events including;

- Social Work team meetings
- Foster Carer Support meetings with the National Fostering Agency
- Foster Carer business meetings
- PoWer – Independent Visiting Service
- Young people's Refugee Forum and youth group
- Residential Provider visits

The Children's Society has promoted equal access and inclusion, through providing interpreting services with young people who have English as a second language and through producing material in different languages including Arabic, Pashtu and Farsi.

## Performance overview

Chart 1 shows that between October 2020 and the end of September 2021 a total of 641 contacts have been made to the Residential Homes.

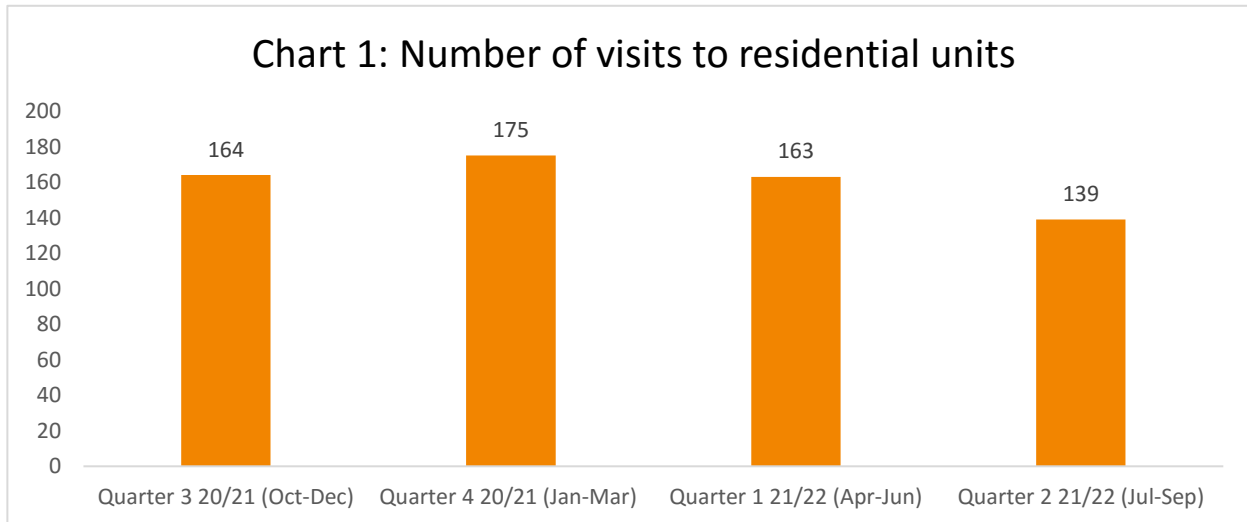
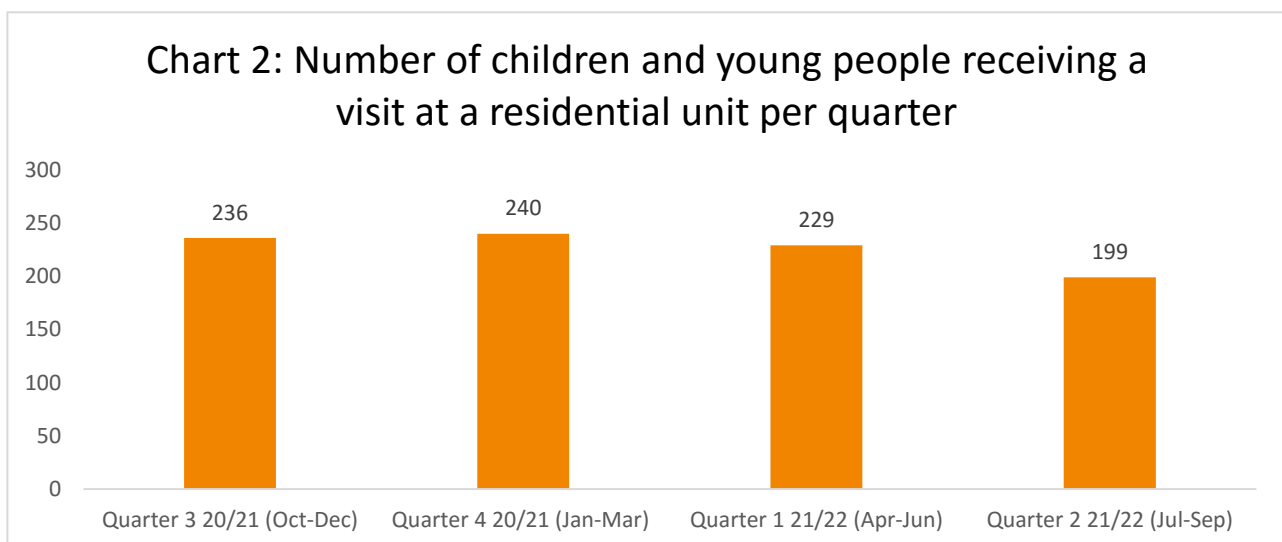


Chart 2 shows the number of young people having contact with their Advocate over each quarter.



During quarter 2 the service has been in transition (moving away from joint commissioning arrangements with the County). Therefore the number of face-to-face visits increased supporting young people to understand the changes that were taking place.

Chart 3 illustrates the percentage of young people receiving a visit every twelve weeks against the benchmark 80%. The table shows that the target was exceeded in each quarter. This reflects the movement toward delivery being primarily provided over phone and digital platforms.

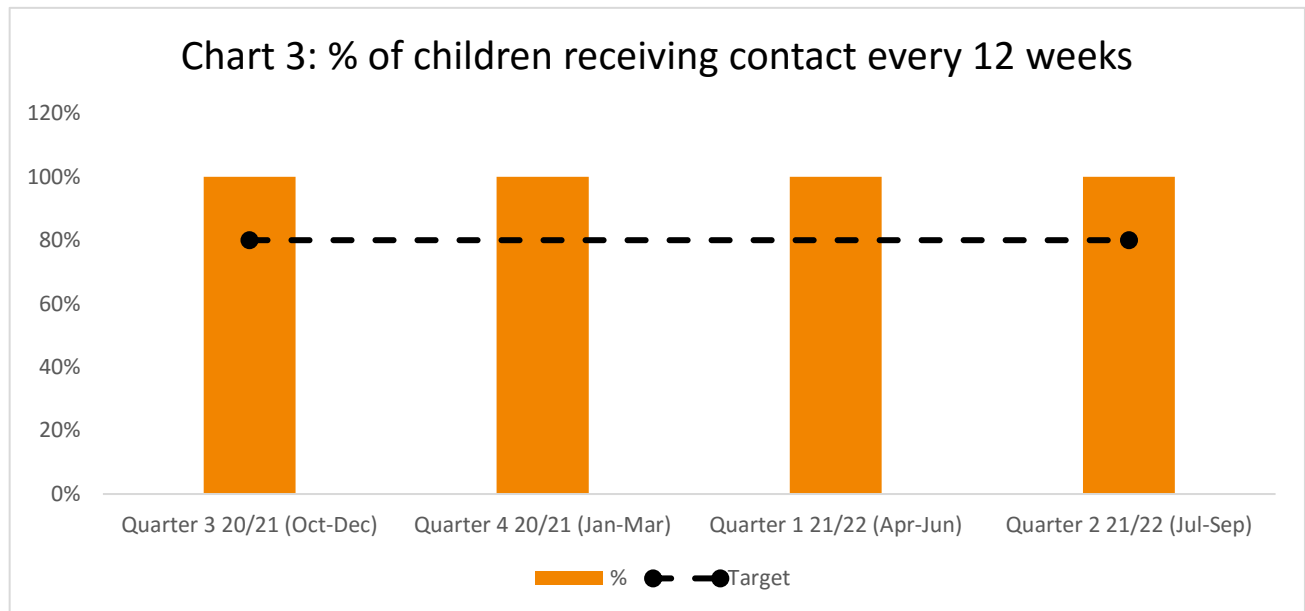
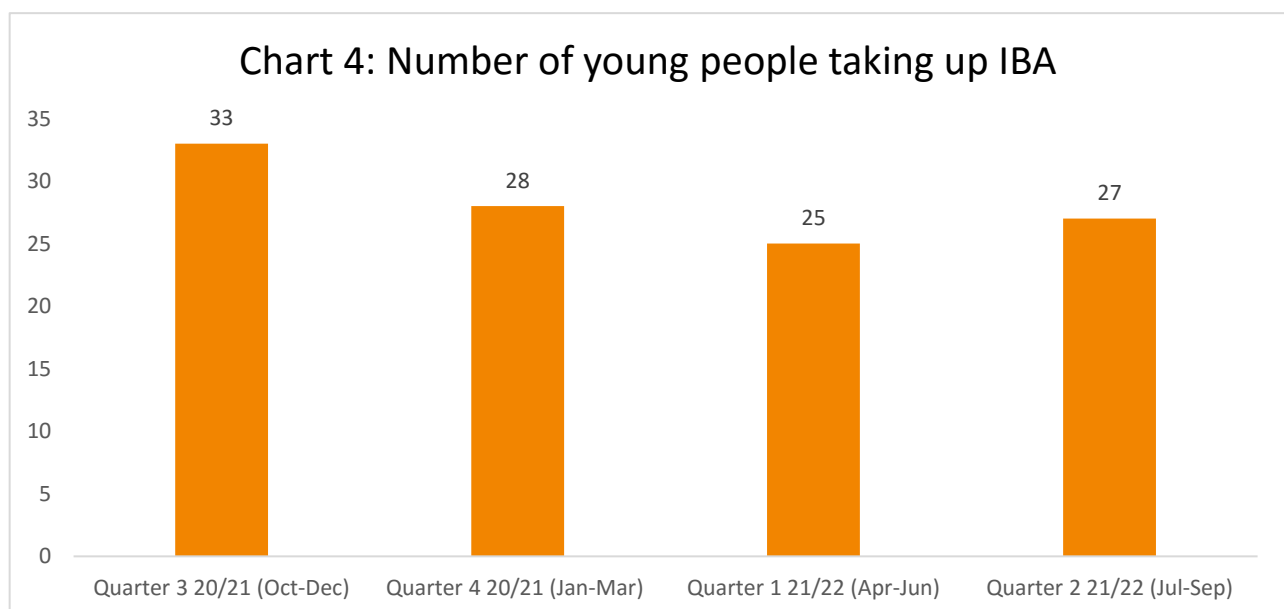
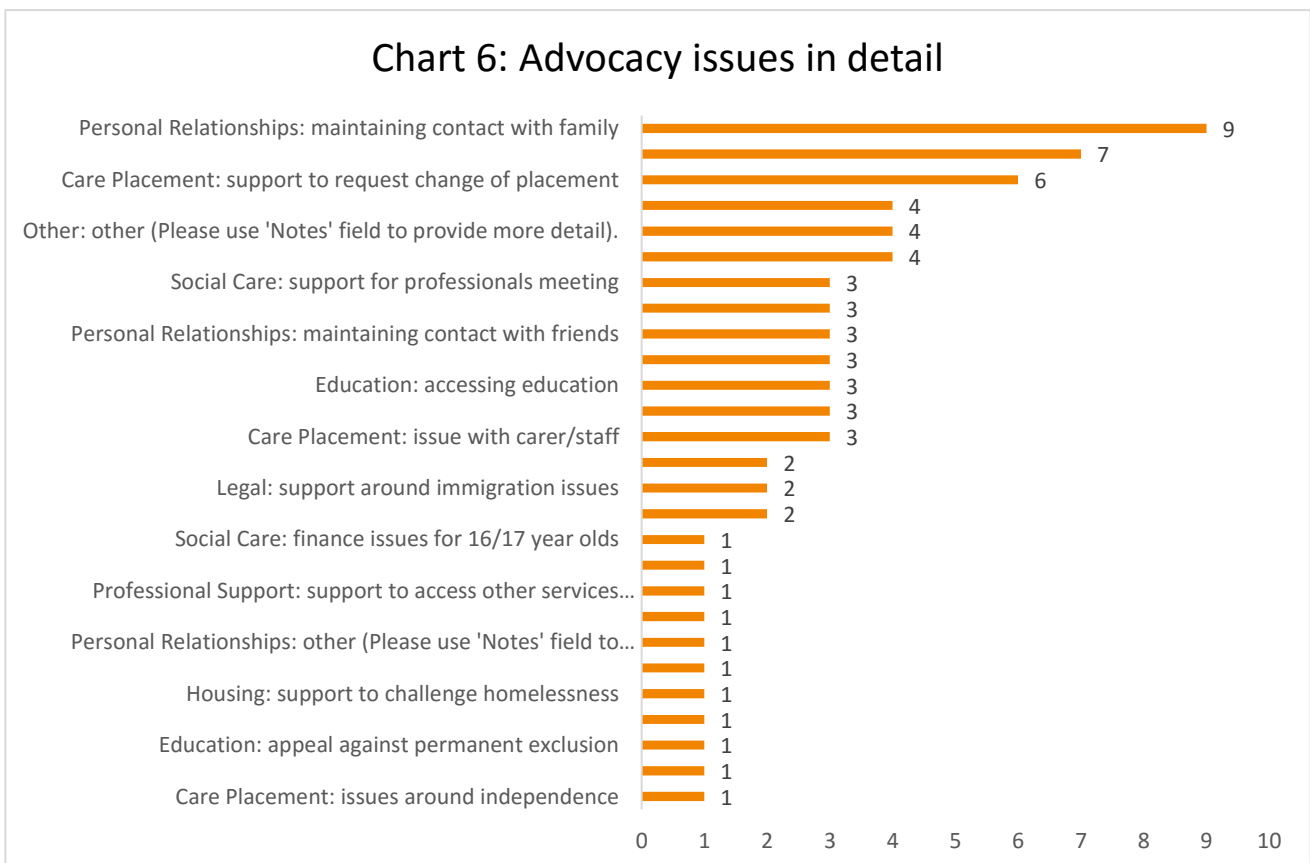
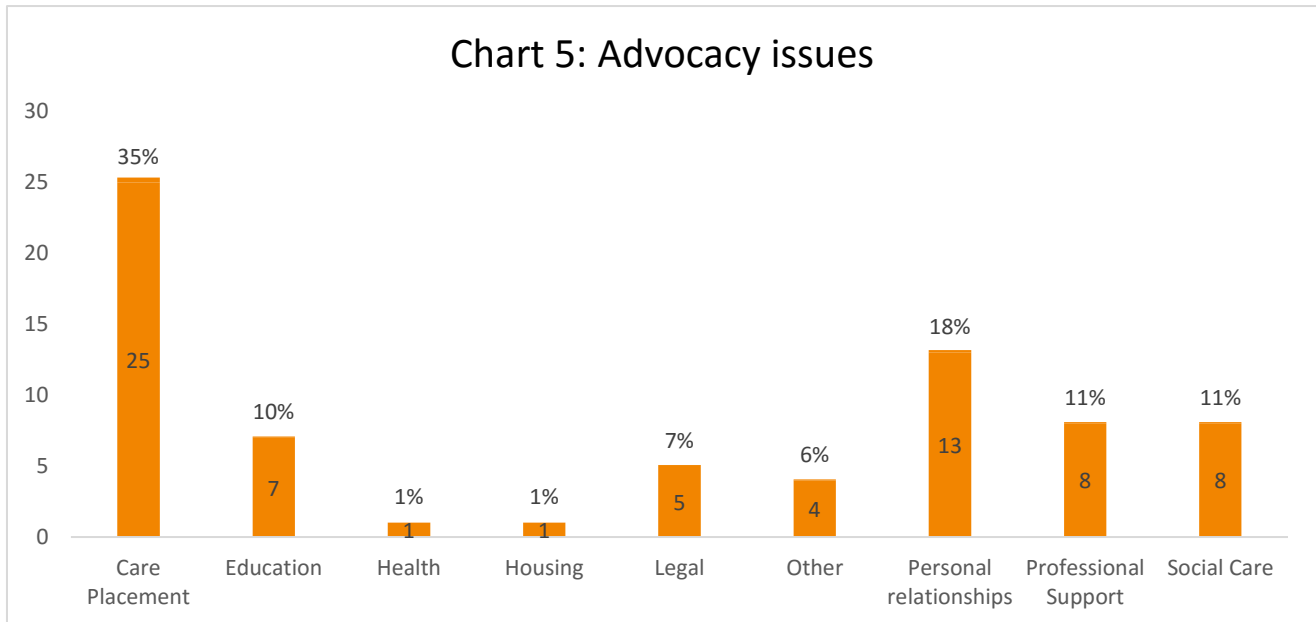


Chart 4 illustrates the number of young people supported with issue-based advocacy. The continuation of COVID measures and restrictions saw an increase in issue based



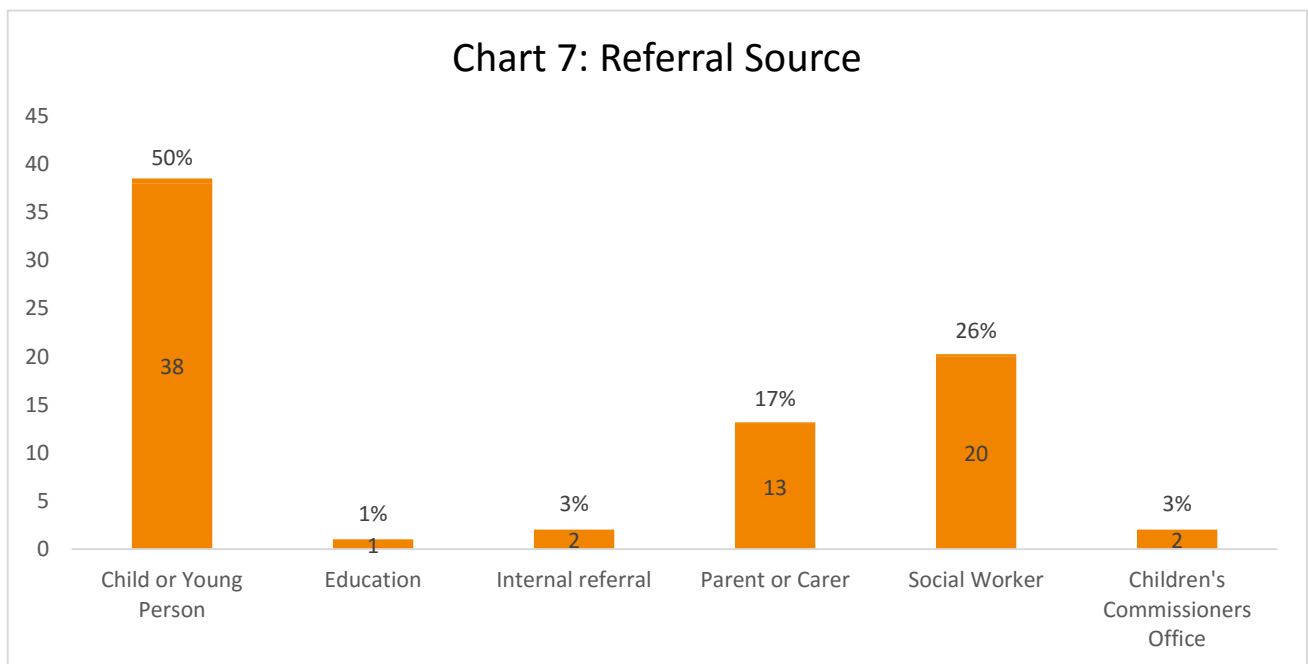
referrals in quarter three – followed by a slight decrease in the subsequent quarters.

Chart 5 shows nine broad areas that young people required advocacy support for, with the majority being in relation to *care placement*, followed by *personal relationships*. A more detailed breakdown of issues can be seen in Chart 6 (p.12) with full descriptions located in the appendix section of this report.



## Referrals for Issue Based Advocacy

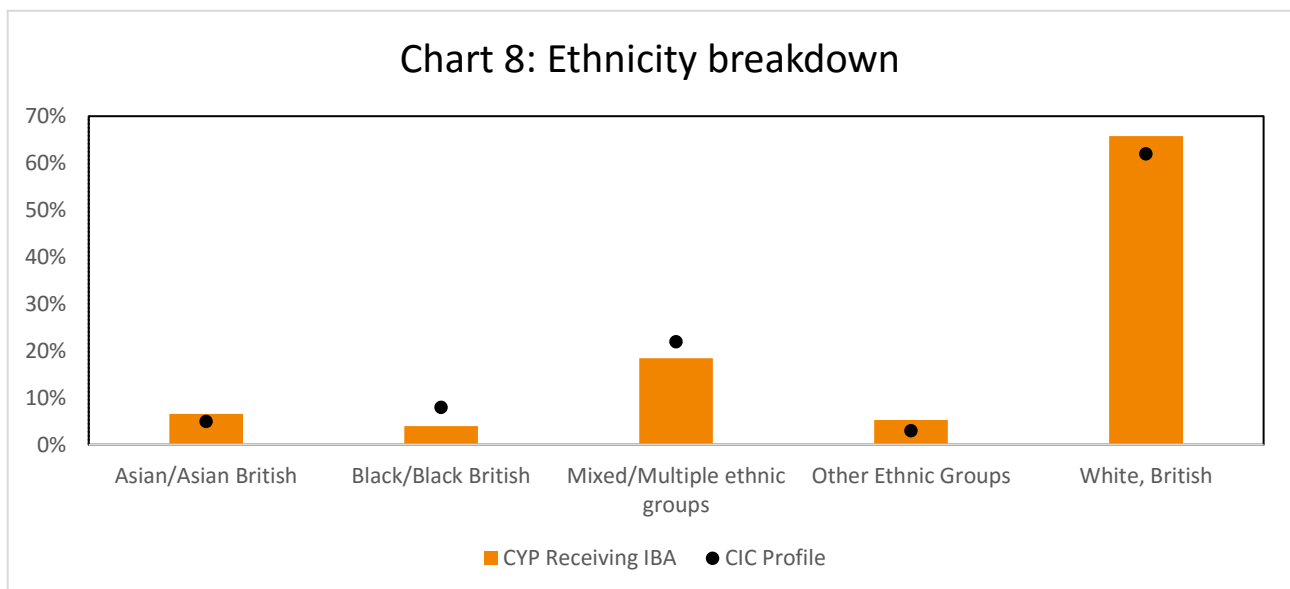
The Advocacy service receives referrals from a range of sources including young people, parents/carers, social workers and other professionals. The largest proportion of referrals at 50% have come directly from young people (last year the figure was 52%), 26% have come via social workers with 17% being made by parents or carers. Referrals from education shows the lowest rate, at 1%.



## Demographic data - Ethnicity

Chart 8 shows children and young people accessing Issue Based Advocacy by ethnicity compared to the Children in Care population.

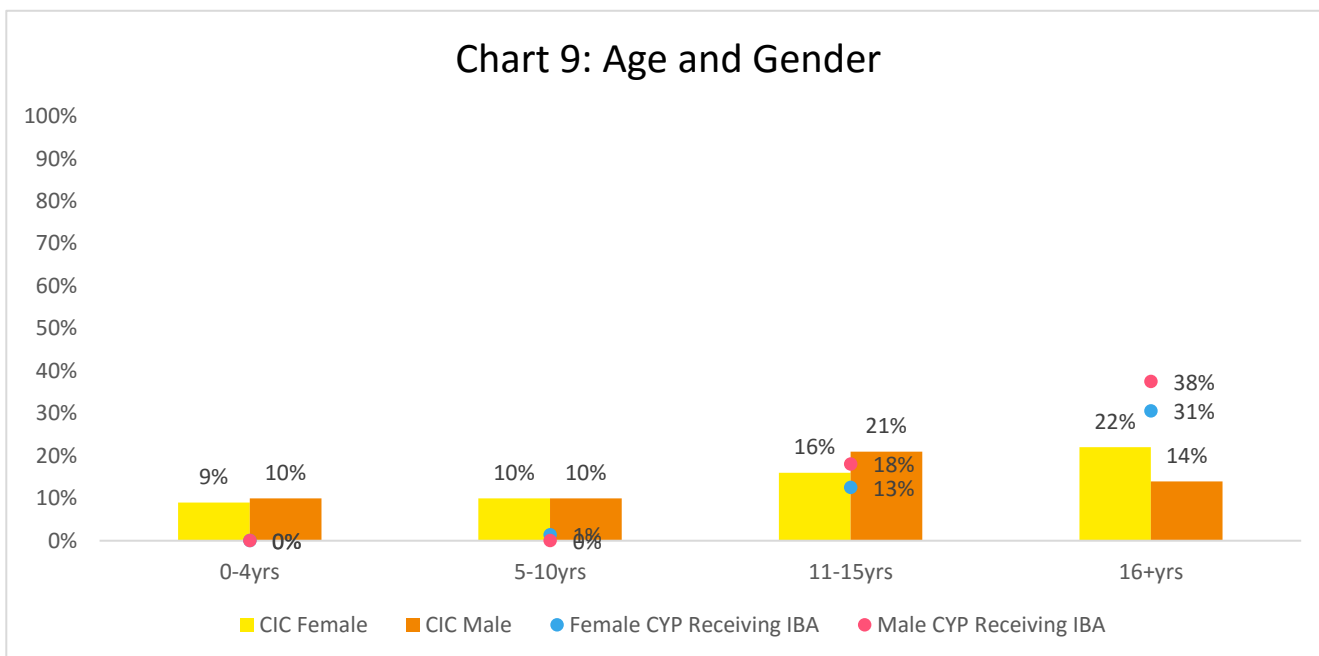
The largest group taking up advocacy at 66% were White British compared to the Children in Care (CiC) population of 62%. Black and Black British young people show 4% accessing provision – against 8% CiC population. While 18% of Mixed and Multiple Ethnic groups received advocacy support compared with a CiC population of 22%.



## Demographic data - Gender and Age

When comparing the age and gender of Children in Care with those receiving Issue Based Advocacy, we can see that the 16 + group at 36% (combined females 22% and males 14%) has the highest access rate.

Males aged 11–15 years (18%) and females aged between 11-15 (13%) were the second and third largest groups to access advocacy. Whilst young people aged 5– 0 years make up 20% of the CIC profile with only 1% receiving advocacy support.

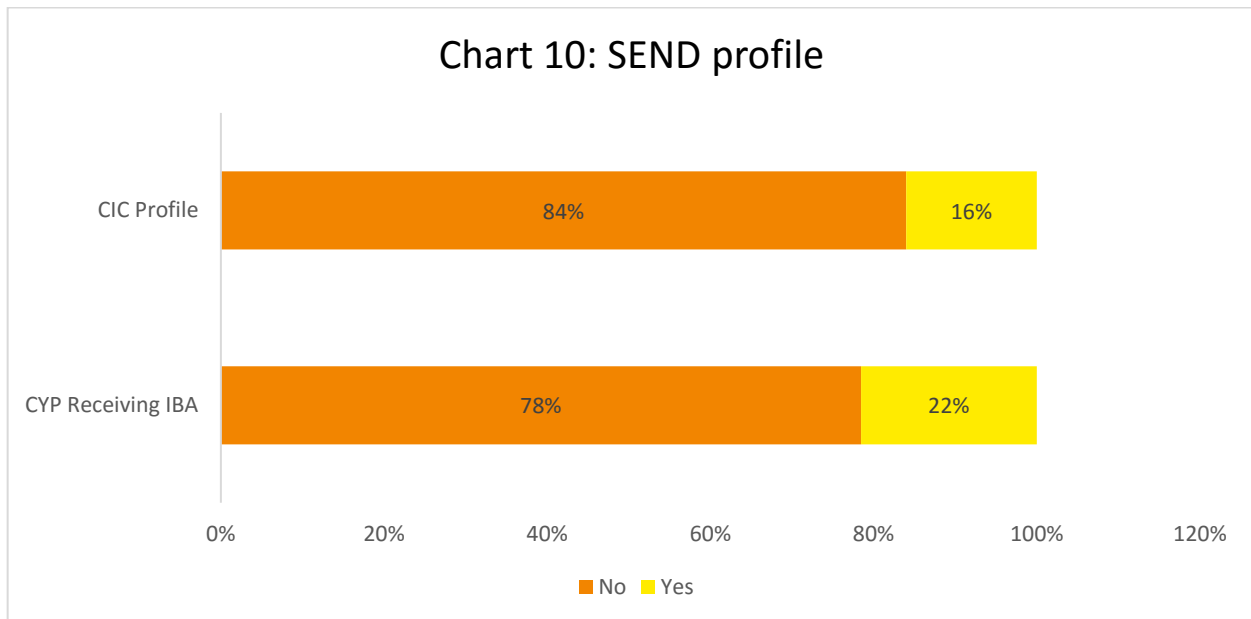


## Special Needs and Disability

The Children's Society provide a dedicated advocate whose focus is to work with Children in Care who have special needs and disability. The Advocate outside of COVID restrictions undertakes regular visits to The Big House, Minster View, and Caudwell House plus a number of private residential settings who provide care for children with special needs and disability.

When appropriate the service will provide non-instructed advocacy to support children who lack capacity to make decisions. In these cases the advocate spends time getting to know the child, observing them in their environment in order to develop an understanding of how they communicate. Through this process (and through talking to parents/cares) the advocate builds up a picture of the young person's wishes and feelings.

Chart 10 show that 16% of Children in Care have a recognised disability or special need. With the Advocacy service working with 22% of these children. This shows a 4% increase from 2019-20 (18%).

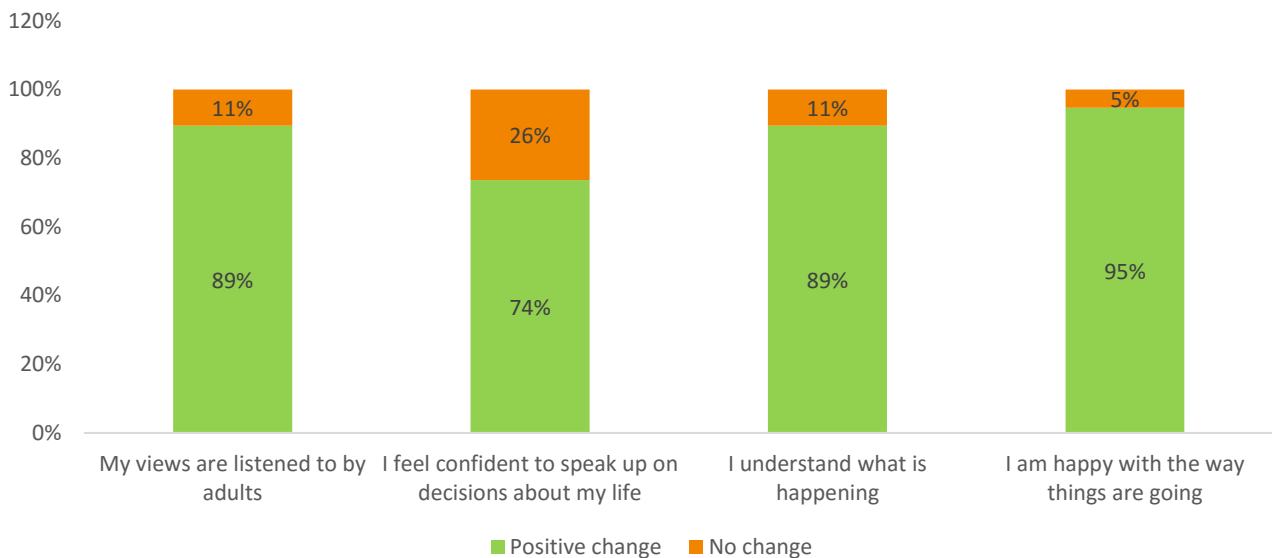


## Children and Young People's Feedback (Issue Based Advocacy)

The service has developed an outcomes tool which is designed to track children and young people's views in relation to the resolution of issues they have raised. It needs be noted that Advocates have difficulty in obtaining feedback from young people once advocacy work has concluded. Anecdotal feedback (from advocates, professionals and young people) suggests that this is largely because young people consider that the advocacy process has finished, and therefore they feel they do not need to engage further with advocacy staff.

Chart 11 shows that 95% of respondents were happier following advocacy intervention, representing a 9% increase from last year. Additionally, 89% indicated they understood what was happening (with their care) and why. While 74% 'felt confident to say what they wanted' and 89% 'felt listened to by adults making decisions' which is a 9% increase on last year.

Chart 11: Change following Advocacy



## Conclusion

Independent advocacy and support for children and young people has been consistent and regular over the past year despite the Covid restrictions. Advocacy provision has by-and-large been provided through phone and digital platform. With advocates continuing, where required to undertake face-to-face visits when responding to children and young people's needs.

The change in delivery has enabled the service to extend its reach to residential units. And this flexible approach to delivery has been well received by young people. Evidenced through the service user feedback above.

Children and young people continue to raise issues directly (50% all referrals) with advocates, demonstrating the value of ongoing advocacy contact with residential homes. There have been a number of compliments and thanks to the advocacy service made from residential units, praising the standard of advocacy provision and the quality of relationships held with young people.

The service continues to work collaboratively with young people and professionals, ensuring children's rights and entitlements are upheld within decision making processes.

## Appendix 1: Detailed breakdown of Advocacy Issues

Advocacy Issue	Count
Care placement - Support young person to express views to social care (whilst living in temporary placement) during move to another placement.	4
Care Placement: issue with carer/staff	3
Care Placement: issues around independence	1
Care Placement: other (Please use 'Notes' field to provide more detail)	3
Care Placement: support to access placement-based activities	1
Care Placement: support to challenge change of placement	7
Care Placement: support to request change of placement	6
Education: accessing education	3
Education: appeal against permanent exclusion	1
Education: other (Please use 'Notes' field to provide more detail)	3
Health: other (Please use 'Notes' field to provide more detail)	1
Housing: support to challenge homelessness	1
Legal other (Please use 'Notes' field to provide more detail)	2
Legal: support around immigration issues	2
Legal: support to challenge care order	1
Other: other (Please use 'Notes' field to provide more detail).	4
Personal Relationships: maintaining contact with family	9
Personal Relationships: maintaining contact with friends	3
Personal Relationships: other (Please use 'Notes' field to provide more detail)	1
Professional Support: issue related to social worker (Please use 'Notes' field to provide more detail)	4
Professional Support: lack of information for CYP	2
Professional Support: other (Please use 'Notes' field to provide more detail)	1
Professional Support: support to access other services (including signposting)	1
Social Care – request clothing allowance to be paid	1
Social Care: finance issues for 16/17 year olds	1
Social Care: support for other, formal meeting	3
Social Care: support for professionals meeting	3
Grand Total	72

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## Corporate Parenting Board

15 November 2021

<b>Title of paper:</b>	Children in Care Social Care Complaints	
<b>Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):</b>	Catherine Underwood - Corporate Director for People, Children and Families	<b>Wards affected:</b> All
<b>Report author(s) and contact details:</b>	Patrick Skeete Social Care Complaints Manager. <a href="mailto:Patrick.skeete@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">Patrick.skeete@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a> 01158765971	
<b>Other colleagues who have provided input:</b>	Ian Hiller - Complaints and Mediation Officer	
<b>Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant)</b>		
<b>Does this report contain any information that is exempt from publication?</b> No		
<b>Relevant Council Plan Key Outcome:</b>		
Clean and Connected Communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Keeping Nottingham Working	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Carbon Neutral by 2028	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Safer Nottingham	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Child-Friendly Nottingham	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Healthy and Inclusive	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Keeping Nottingham Moving	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Improve the City Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Better Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial Stability	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Serving People Well	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):</b>		
<p>This report includes a summary of the statutory Social Care Complaints procedure, which ensures young people have a robust process to express their dissatisfaction. The report highlights complaints made specifically by Children in Care in accordance with the statutory Social Care Complaints procedure. This report also focuses on the nature of the complaints made and whether the complaints were addressed within the statutory timescales.</p>		
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>		
<b>1</b>	That the board continue to support the effective complaints handling of young people in care and understand required duties of corporate parents in relation to addressing the concerns of young people in care.	

## 1. Reasons for recommendations

- 1.1 Nottingham City has a legislative duty to ensure all young people have a robust complaints process to address any concerns that that they are responsible for.

## **2. Background (including outcomes of consultation)**

- 2.1 The aim of the Social Care Complaints Team is to resolve service user dissatisfaction and learn from complaints in order to improve service delivery. The complaints service operates a statutory complaints procedure, which includes the production of an annual report on the operation of the complaints procedure.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.2 Complaints which are made and resolved within 24 hours are not logged as complaints. This is in line with national guidance.
- 2.3 The remit of the complaints team is to manage the statutory process. The team is required to check that a person who wishes to make a complaint on behalf of a child has sufficiency of interest in respect of making a complaint: it obtains consent where this is required. In respect of children's complaints, consideration may need to be given as to whether a child is Fraser competent; in other circumstances, consideration will need to be given to determine whether a complaint is being made in the interests of the young person, where she or he or the parent may lack the necessary capacity. Where a Power of Attorney is raised as a right to make a complaint on another person's behalf, the complaints team must establish whether such a Power is registered or not
- 2.4 It is only after these matters have been considered that the Social Care Complaints Team asks a Service Manager or Team Manager to provide a written response to a complaint, and to respond to the complaint within the timescales, as defined within the relevant statutory complaints process. At stage 2 of the procedure independent investigators are commissioned by the Complaints Team to investigate complaints and to provide reports to the Authority detailing their findings and recommendations. Where a complainant remains dissatisfied the Complaints Team arranges a stage 3 complaints review panel, comprised of three independent people, which is asked to review the Authority's response to the complaint as well as the stage 2 findings.
- 2.5 The Complaints Team provides advice to the operational teams on how to avoid unnecessary escalation of complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman. Further support is provided to the Department in managing complaints from the Local Government Ombudsman, along with training for front-line staff.
- 2.6 The Complaints Team has been indispensable in identifying complaints that have the potential to be escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman; advice is offered to operational staff on how to limit the impact of such complaints, thereby reducing any reputational damage to the Authority.
- 2.7 Where a complaint reaches the Ombudsman, the Complaints Team is highly skilled at risk assessing complaints in order to identify potential failings, so that they may be rectified and resolved, before the Ombudsman investigates the complaint, again this helps to avoid reputational damage.
- 2.8 The expectation from Ofsted is that the Local Authority does not operate a one-dimensional view of quality & practice. Complaints provide a particular perspective on performance.

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<sup>1</sup> The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure Regulations 2006

## **Children's Statutory Social Care Complaints Procedure.**

- 2.9 Stage 1 – the department is asked to provide a written response within 10 working days, this may be extended to 20 working days
- 2.10 Stage 2 – the complainant, usually where s/he remains dissatisfied following a response at stage 1, may request an investigation of their complaint; this is usually undertaken by an Independent Investigator, overseen by an Independent Person, both commissioned by the Complaints Team. Records are scrutinised and staff are interviewed by the investigator, after which the stage 2 outcome is provided in the form of a detailed investigation report, which should be available within 25 working days, but this may be extended to 65 working days
- 2.11 Stage 3 – if the complainant remains dissatisfied after receiving the investigator's findings and any recommendations, s/he may request that an independent panel (comprised of 3 independent people) review the complaint and investigation. The complainant and any representative, and a representative from the department, along with the investigator and independent person are invited to the panel too
- 2.12 The relevant director then writes to the complainant to explain if the department accepts the findings and recommendations of the Stage 3 Panel; the director also explains what action plan has been agreed to be put in place, so as to complete any recommendations.
- 2.13 **Complaints Received from Children in Care 01/09/2020 – 31/08/2021**
- 2.13.1 Complaints frequently have more than one issue, as such, some parts may be upheld and some not upheld. Therefore, the outcome of the overall complaint may be mostly upheld or mostly not upheld; but in situations where none of the complaints are upheld then the overall complaint is "Not upheld" or conversely, it is "Upheld" where the complaints are all upheld.
- 2.13.2 Out of jurisdiction complaints (OOJ) include those where the same complaint has been made more than once. Under the complaints regulations we cannot investigate the same matter twice. OOJ complaints may also include complaints about non-social care services or complaints received where the necessary consent is not forthcoming.
- 2.13.3 There are times where there is a 'No Finding' outcome. This is usually where there is no evidence to support a view or where we are unable to come to a definitive decision.

Complaint	Nature of complaint	Days to resolve	Outcome
1	Attitude or behaviour of staff	5	Not upheld
2	Attitude or behaviour of staff	18	No finding
3	Attitude or behaviour of staff	12	No finding
4	Attitude or behaviour of staff	14	Not upheld
5	Attitude or behaviour of staff	19	Mostly not upheld

6	Unwelcome decision	5	No finding
7	Attitude or behaviour of staff	12	Not upheld
8	Attitude or behaviour of staff	19	Not upheld
9	Attitude or behaviour of staff	6	No finding
10	Attitude or behaviour of staff	19	Mostly upheld
11	Attitude or behaviour of staff	2	Mostly not upheld
12	Concern about the quality or appropriateness of the service	14	Not upheld
13	Attitude or behaviour of staff	15	Not upheld
14	Concern about the quality or appropriateness of the service	15	Upheld
15	Attitude or behaviour of staff	Stage 2 1 day	Declined
16	Concern about the quality or appropriateness of the service	Stage 2 45 days	Mostly not upheld

## 2.14 Main Points:

- a) Compared with the previous reporting period, which was for 8 months from 01/01/2020 to 31/08/2020, the number of complaints increased by 3. However, this current reporting period is for 12 months.
- b) Of the 16 complaints received, 15 were resolved at stage 1 of the complaints procedure, but one was investigated at stage 2 by an independent investigator. One stage 2 request was declined as it was about a professional decision, which could not be changed by way of the complaints procedure.
- c) All the complaints were concluded within the statutory timescale of 20 working days, or 65 working days in respect of the stage 2 investigation.
- d) No strong themes were identified during this reporting period, as no two complaints were the same. Although, “not feeling listened to” and “not feeling supported” were commonly raised concerns; however, when investigated, it was found that young people often felt like this in circumstances where staff did not agree with the young person’s view.

## 2.15 Individual complaint synopsis

- **Complaint 1** was about a perceived lack of support provided to a young person who was about to leave care and who had alleged she had been assaulted. This was investigated but not upheld.
- **Complaint 2** was from a young person in a care facility who was unhappy with staff attitude towards her. This was investigated but not substantiated.
- **Complaint 3** was made by a young person who was unhappy with her social worker. Although the complaint was not substantiated, Children's Services reallocated her case to a different worker.
- **Complaint 4** a young person complained about the lack of communication from his personal advisor at the point he was leaving care; this was not upheld.
- **Complaint 5** was also about a personal advisor. A young person complained he was "racially profiled," patronised and made to feel like a nuisance by the worker. Although mostly not upheld, an apology was given for the suggestion that he had been "pestering" the worker.
- **Complaint 6** a looked-after child in a residential home complained she did not wish to leave the home; but the professionals involved felt the home was not meeting her needs and instead she needed to move to a mother and baby unit. The complaint was not substantiated, and the response explained that her view that she did not want to move would be put before the court where her and her baby would be legally represented.
- **Complaint 7** a young person complained her social worker had shouted at her and so she wanted a different worker. The complaint was not upheld.
- **Complaint 8** an advocate brought a complaint on behalf of a young person who wanted a different social worker; but this was not upheld. Subsequently the advocate asked for the complaint to be investigated at stage 2.
- **Complaint 9** a complaint was made by a young person who was unhappy at a comment made by his former IRO at the end of a review meeting, which suggested he would have to remain in care until he was 18. The new IRO met with the young person and explained the former IRO apologised that her comment had upset him. The young person felt this had now resolved his complaint.
- **Complaint 10** was about poor communication from a personal advisor; the complaint was mostly upheld, and the young person received a written apology.
- **Complaint 11** a young person in a residential home complained that a worker had searched his personal belongings. The complaint was mostly not upheld.
- **Complaint 12** an advocate complained on behalf of a young person, stating that the Pathway Plan did not set out what money he was entitled to, nor did it state what he had spent so far. The complaint was not upheld.
- **Complaint 13** a young person with an advocate complained that she had not been removed by her social worker from a domestic violence situation; but the complaint was not upheld.

- **Complaint 14** a young person complained she had been misled by a worker who had advised her that her utility bills would be paid by Children's Services. The complaint was upheld, and a written apology was provided.
- **Complaint 15** a young person supported by an advocate requested a stage 2 investigation because Children's Services had declined her request for a different social worker. The service manager and IRO had explained to her that in their view it was not in her best interests to change worker at what was a crucial time, as she would soon be leaving care. The stage 2 was request declined because the complaints process cannot change a professional opinion nor can it change the allocated social worker, as this is an operational decision.
- **Complaint 16** a young person supported by an advocate complained that Children's Services had not taken seriously the concerns she had raised, and that this had resulted in a failure to offer her and her siblings the necessary safeguards and support. The complaint was investigated at stage 2 by an independent investigator. The outcome was that the complaint was mostly not upheld, but an apology was recommended because the investigator had identified that there had been procedural delays in respect of a couple of matters.

### **3 Other options considered in making recommendations**

3.1 None

### **4 Consideration of Risk**

4.1 None.

### **5 Background (including outcomes of consultation)**

5.1 This is contained within the body of the report.

### **6 Finance colleague comments (including implications and value for money)**

6.1 None

### **7. Legal colleague comments**

- 7.1 The Children Act 1989 (S24D & 26[3] & The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 require each Local Authority to establish formal procedures for considering complaints in respect of services to children. Government Regulations were introduced in 2006 and the Secretary of State issued statutory guidance under the Local Government Social Services Act 1970. Failure to adhere to timescales could mean maladministration payments being made to the complainant
- 7.2 If the above legislation is not adhered to the Local Authority will fail to fulfil its statutory duty and this will impact on service delivery to complainants resulting in the involvement of the Local Government Ombudsman with a potential outcome of the Department being requested to make maladministration payments if the LGO feels there has been undue delay in progressing the complaint, this in turn may cause reputational risk to the Department.

**8. Other relevant comments**

8.1 None

**9. Crime and Disorder Implications (If Applicable)**

9.1 Not applicable

**10. Social value considerations (If Applicable)**

10.1 Not applicable

**11. Regard to the NHS Constitution (If Applicable)**

11.1 No applicable

**12. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

12.1 This is not required as the report is an update for Board Members

**13. Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)**

13.1 This is not required as the report is an update for Board Members

**14. Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA)**

14.1 This is not required as the report is an update for Board Members

**15. List of background papers relied upon in writing this report (not including published documents or confidential or exempt information)**

15.1 None

**16. Published documents referred to in this report**

16.1 The Children Act 1989 (S24D & 26[3] & The Local Authority Social Services Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 1991 National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2006

16.2 Getting the Best from Complaints National Guidance.

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# Nottingham City Council

## Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service

### IRO Service

### Children in Care

### Annual Report

# 2020 – 2021



**Nottingham**  
City Council

**This report sets out the contribution of the Independent Reviewing Officers to quality assuring and improving services for children whom Nottingham City Council are responsible for.**

This Annual Report provides evidence relating to the services in Nottingham City as required by statutory guidance.

The core business of the team includes the chairing of Children in Care reviews and monitoring the activity of the Local Authority as outlined in the IRO Handbook 2010.

The IRO Annual Report will be presented to The Corporate Parenting Board and the Local Safeguarding Partnership Board (LCPB).

**Purpose of Service and Legal Context.**

The service sits within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service of Nottingham City Council's Children's Integrated Services division. The Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Service is set within the framework of the updated IRO Handbook, linked to revised Care Planning Regulations and Guidance, which were introduced in 2015.

**The Responsibility of the IRO (Children in Care).**

- The responsibility of the IRO changed from the management of the review process to a wider overview of the case. This includes regular monitoring and follow-up between reviews.

**The IRO**

- Plays a key role in relation to the improvement of care planning for children in care.
- Ensures a process for challenging drift and delay.
- Ensures that the views of the children, parents and carers are given sufficient weight in Care planning.

**Professional Profile of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service (IRO).**

The IRO Service sits within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service offering independence in care planning. There are two Service Managers with distinctive roles one responsible for Children in Care and the other Child Protection. Both sides of the service sit together to support the crossover between child protection work and the work with children in care to ensure that we manage crisis intervention alongside care planning.

**Independent Reviewing Officers.**

Every child who is '*looked after*' (Nottingham City use the term children in care) must have a care plan. This document details the long-term plan for the child's upbringing, and the arrangements made by Nottingham City Children's Integrated Services to meet the child's day-to-day needs as well as the long term care planning for the child or young person. All Local Authorities have a statutory duty to review the Care Plan regularly, within legislative timescales, as stipulated in the Care Planning and Case Review Regulations.

It is a legal requirement for every child who is in care to have an Independent Reviewing Officer appointed to them under Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The Independent Reviewing Officers Handbook (2010) outlines the statutory guidance for IRO's and Local Authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review for children in care. The handbook specifies that the IRO should provide continuity in the oversight of matters relating to a child being in care and that they should strive to establish a consistent relationship with the child. The statutory duties of the IRO include the following:

- Monitor the performance of the Local Authority and their function in relation to the child's case.
- Participate in any review of the child's case.
- Ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child are given due consideration by the appropriate authority.
- Perform any other function, which is prescribed by the regulations.

From December 2012, under the terms of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 the children in care definition was extended to include those children placed on remand in a secure unit or youth offending institution. This legislation placed a responsibility on all Local Authorities to treat the child who is remanded into custody as a child in care up to the age of 18 years. Each of these children is required to have a Remand Plan, which is equivalent to the Care Plan.

### **Independent Reviewing Officers role in Short Breaks.**

The Statutory Guidance on how to safeguard and promote the welfare of disabled children using short breaks 2010 focuses in particular on the decision as to whether overnight short breaks should be provided under section 17 or section 20 of the Children Act 1989 and the arrangements in relation to '*looked after*' status if section 20 provision is made.

The guidance states (para 3.19) that reviews for children who are receiving short breaks under S20 arrangements but who are not looked after should take place at least every six months. Reviews for children in care must take place in accordance with the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and be undertaken by an IRO.

Within Nottingham City Council Short Breaks Services Policy, IROs are responsible for chairing all reviews where children are accessing Short Breaks for 36 nights or above.

### **Management Team and Staffing.**

The Head of Service is John Matravers and the service continues to have a permanent staff team. The Fostering IRO is now managed by the IRO service.

As a service we continue to have a culturally diverse team, which reflects the diverse population of Nottingham City.

During the Covid pandemic the IROs have adapted to new ways of working which have included remote working with virtual meetings as well as face to face activity. They have been able to successfully engage some young people through virtual means which is positive. Due to the challenges of the pandemic the IRO service developed new ways of working which meant that contact with children and families was maintained.

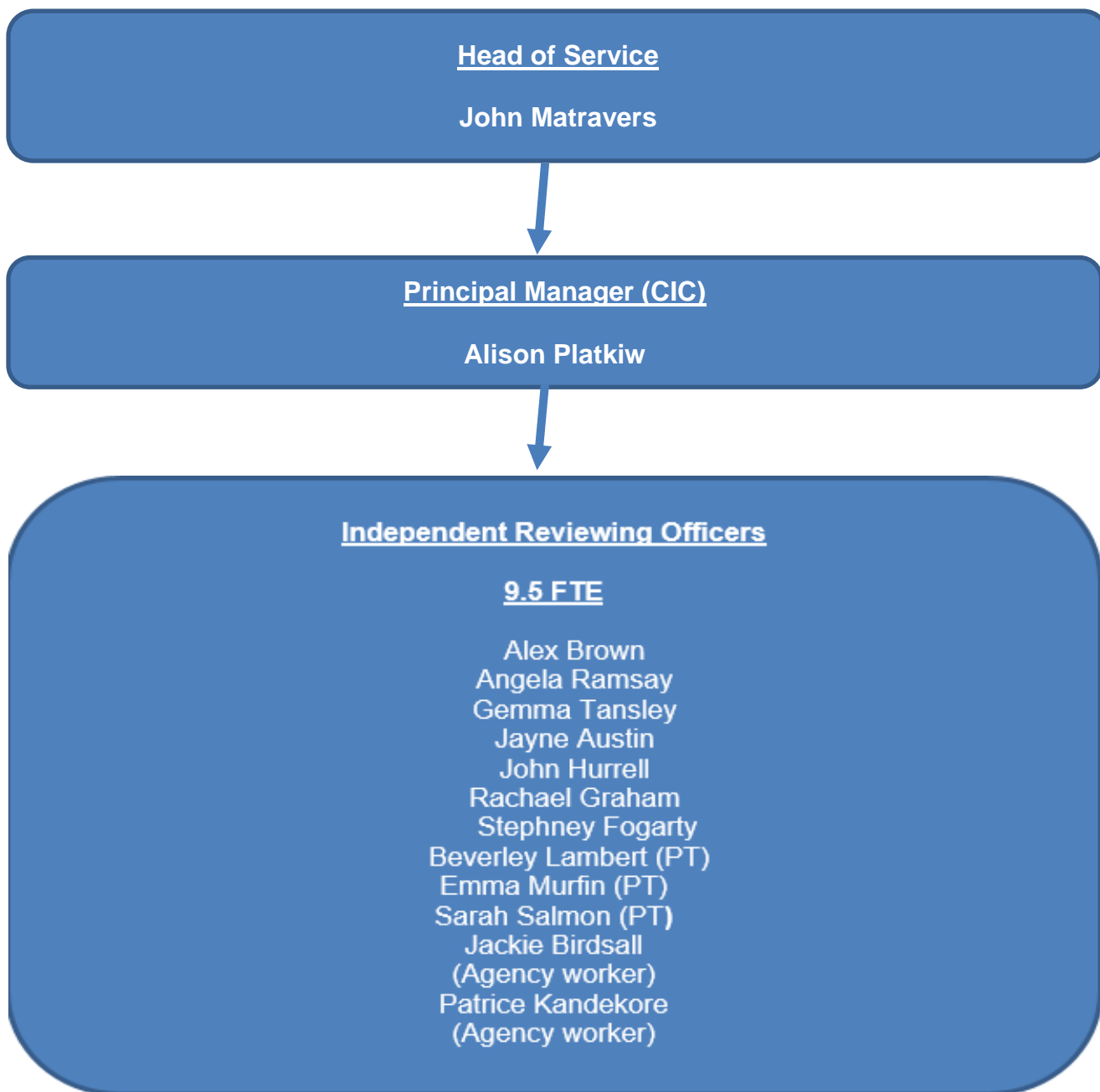
### **Supervision and Training.**

IROs have monthly supervision and informal supervision when required. All IROs have a yearly performance appraisal and are encouraged to attend training in line with the requirements of Social Work England. The team has the opportunity to attend regional workshops for IROs which are held four times a year and includes our partners from the East Midlands region.

Team members access the training provided by the Nottingham City Council learning and development team as well as the LSPB training opportunities. Partner agencies also offer a variety of training courses, which can be accessed. In addition, we have quarterly team development days in which we have undertaken work around improvements to the IRO Service or undertaken focused training.

There is a protocol in place to provide a framework for communication and working practices between CAFCASS and the IRO service. Whilst meetings with CAFCASS have been hampered by capacity and lockdown during the year, direct liaison between the local CAFCASS Service Manager and the IRO Service Manager continues to be developed with regular liaison between the services.

**IRO Service structure chart:**



**Updates on priorities set in 2019-2020.**

The improvement plan developed following the OFSTED visit in 2018 focussed on a re-design as to how children in care reviews are conducted. These needed to be more strengths based using the Signs of Safety model. This enables the use of a more child friendly approach. In 2020, we also engaged with colleagues from Essex County Council as our Partners in Practice and learned from their child-centred approach.

This identified the need to simplify the care plan by reducing the number of actions and recommendations following a review. The outcome of which is that the plan is smarter, easier to

understand and children and families can be clear about what needs to change or what needs to happen to achieve more positive outcomes for children.

1. Child Contribution paper to be revised and used at every review – this is due to be formally launched. The Service Manager for the IRO service is negotiating with IT colleagues to design a bespoke website where all information that children need to know about whilst in the care of the Local Authority, including their rights, how to access Mind of My Own (MOMO) etc. This will be designed to be more accessible and on a more friendly forum.
2. Process to be developed to address drift and delay in the care plan- In response a case review form has been developed whereby the IRO has to review the child's file in between reviews to identify any issues about case progression. If there are any concerns identified then the IRO completes the form and forwards this to the team manager to address the concerns.

### **Children in Care Data 2020 - 21**

The Children in Care outturn position at 2020 - 2021 was 687. Caseloads are slightly higher than recommended in the IRO handbook. The handbook recommends a caseload of 50-70 per IRO as being manageable. At present 8 full time IRO's hold caseloads of around 72-75, with 3 of the posts being part time holding caseloads of around 25-30 cases.

In terms of outcomes during 2020-21, there were 24 Adoption Orders granted, 29 Special Guardianship Orders granted (SGO) and 8 Child Arrangement Orders made.

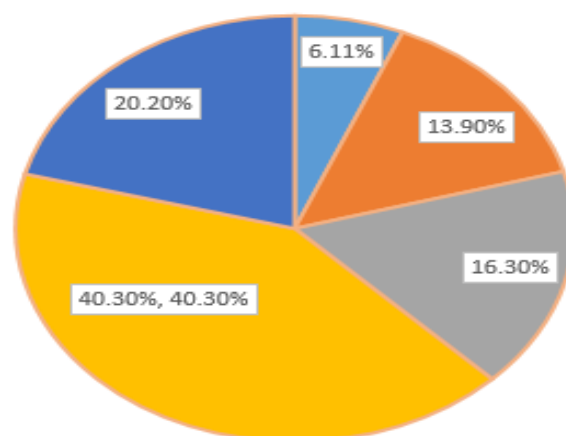
During the reporting period 64% of Young People/Children have remained in the same placement for at least 2 years or more. This has provided stability in both care and education.

**The data for children in care in age groups, ethnicity and gender is detailed below:**

Age	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Under 1	6.7%	5.3%	6.4%	6%	6.11%
1 - 4	9.7%	12.3%	10.2%	12%	13.90%
5 - 9	18.5%	16.7%	14.9%	16%	16.30%
10 - 15	41.2%	41.6%	42.1%	42%	40.30%
Over 16	23.9%	24.1%	26.4%	24%	20.20%

There is no marked increased of note from last years figures.

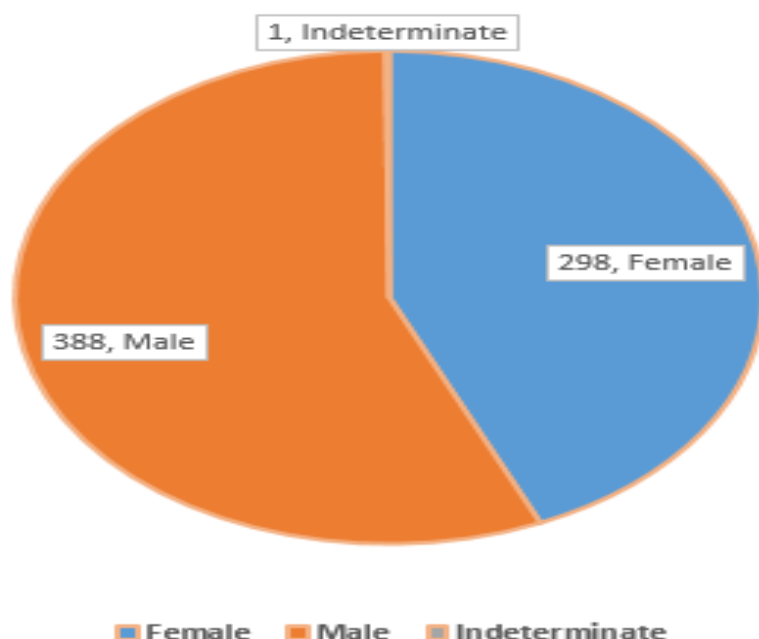
**Ages of Children in Care**



<b>Ethnicity of Children in Care</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Arab	3	24	0	4	8
Asian / Asian British / Bangladeshi	1	1	3	3	4
Asian / Asian British / Pakistani	13	13	11	11	10
Asian / Asian British / Indian	3	3	3	0	1
Asian / Asian British / Any other Asian background	17	18	26	19	19
Black / Black British / African	29	23	35	31	24
Black / Black British / Caribbean	20	23	20	25	31
Black / Black British / Any other Black background	6	5	8	6	12
Gypsy / Roma	3	3	8	7	8
Mixed White & Black African	8	8	9	7	7
Mixed White & Asian	6	5	5	14	26*
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	71	78	68	88	89
Mixed any other mixed background	26	31	27	26	23
Other ethnic group	16	0	20	19	29
Unknown	5	1	2	3	1
White British	362	356	348	361	360
White Irish	7	7	4	3	4
White any other White background	24	19	32	35	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>618</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>687</b>

\*There has been an increase of children from a dual heritage White/Asian in this reporting period. This reflects three additional families, 2 families of 4 siblings and 1 family with 3 children, with 4 of the children being placed with family.

**Gender of Children in Care**



<b>Gender of Children in</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
------------------------------	-------------	-------------	-------------	-------------	-------------

Care					
Male	331	328	359	373	388
Female	289	292	270	283	298
Indeterminate	0	0	0	0	1

There is no marked increased of note from last years figures. One Young Person is transitioning therefore this is described as Indeterminate for the report.

### **Advocacy.**

The commissioning of advocacy services remains with the Children's Society. They have been to a team meeting to introduce their service. Additionally, the Children's Society leaflet is included in the Coming into care pack. IRO's this year have actively accessed this service on behalf of children or have encouraged them to access this service. Data will be available in the next reporting period.

### **Timeliness of Children in Care Reviews.**

94.9% of Children in Care Reviews took place within the statutory timescales which is positive because it serves to ensure that a review of care planning is taking place at regular intervals.

### **Children and Young People's Involvement in Reviews.**

92% of children in care participated in their review process through a number of fora either by attending the meeting, completing the contribution paper or for some having contact either by phone, email or a virtual visit with the IRO before their review is held. Childrens attendance at their review meeting has decreased by 2%. The 2% identified have been those young people who do not wish to participate online.

IROs continue to support and encourage children to chair their own meetings or set their own agenda where appropriate.

Contact with young people between reviews continues to improve as caseloads allow. Also, with the Covid restrictions, IROs have made use of virtual calls to gain the wishes and feelings of children for their reviews.

IROs continue to make a conscious effort to further increase the participation of children by undertaking child friendly reviews which are individualised to each child's needs and abilities. Furthermore, children are reassured in between reviews or before the review starts, giving them the confidence to participate fully in their own review. The IROs were assisted by our Partners in Practice, Essex, who helped to identify what worked and what didn't enabling the IRO Service to adapt accordingly.

### **Progress and Activity between Children in Care Reviews.**

During this reporting period, the IROs have been able to monitor the progress of their allocated children thus fulfilling their duties as outlined in the IRO Handbook (2010). This has resulted in care plans being effectively monitored and any drift or delay escalated to the relevant social work team. This has also improved communication with the Social Work teams.

All children at their initial Child in Care review are given the contact details of their allocated IRO and every effort is made to ensure the same IRO chairs any subsequent Child in Care reviews, offering a level of consistency moving forward. The stability within the team has enabled strong relationships to be developed between the child or young person and their IRO. Furthermore, there is evidence of the IRO regularly reviewing the quality of practice in the child's file, thereby strengthening the IRO footprint/management oversight.

### **Audits.**

IROs contribute to the learning and improvement framework which includes the auditing of randomly selected cases. Analysis is drawn from this information and action identified where appropriate. During this reporting year 22 cases have been presented at the audit moderation panel - all children were deemed safe with 64% (Reviews) and 50% (Plans) deemed to be good or better. The IROs have been given individual feedback from these audits. The feedback is also discussed in team meetings to enable information sharing and improvements to be made.

### **Management Oversight.**

Statutory Guidance states that operational Social Work Managers must consider the decisions from the Review before they are finalised. This is due in part to the need to ensure any resource implications have been addressed. Once the decisions are completed, the Manager has 5 days to raise any queries or objections.

IROs have continued to monitor the quality of care plans, adoption plans, pathway plans and Social Worker reports. Where any issues are identified, the IROs raised these informally with the appropriate team manager, however, if these concerns are not acted upon then a formal escalation process commences.

### **Dispute Resolution Data 2020- 21**

#### **Dispute Resolution Policy**

Overall, during the course of the past year, the majority of formal escalations have been responded to and resolved.

Where matters remain unresolved, the IROs follow the dispute resolution policy which involves notifying Senior Managers within social work teams. This ensures that the appropriate actions are taken to ensure that the young people are safeguarded appropriately in line with their care plan and the recommendations made at reviews.

The dispute resolution pathway needs to be developed within Liquid Logic. This will enable more accurate reporting in terms of the number of disputes and the outcomes. Currently there remain challenges in embedding this process into the system but we hope to resolve these over the coming year.

Looking back over the last reporting year the service has raised 72 formal concerns. None of these have gone beyond the level of a Head of Service, (with only one dispute being escalated to a Head of Service). No cases have necessitated a referral to CAFCASS to be resolved. From the data currently analysed the main contributing factors to the disputes are:

- Issues around placement suitability.
- Numerous changes of Social Workers
- Health needs not recorded as met on the child's file.
- Issues with statutory visits not being in timescale.
- Drift and delay in progressing the care plan.
- Reports not written and shared with parents, carers and child 3 days before the review is held.

### **Compliments from the IRO Service.**

The dispute policy in place also includes the formal recognition of good practice. This involves the IRO completing a compliments form which is then sent to the relevant Senior Managers. During this reporting year 21 compliments have been sent to Senior Managers about the Social Worker's good practice and the IRO's wishing to have this formally recognised.

**Annual Work Programme and Key Themes for April 2021- March 2022.**

1. To work with the Fostering Manager to develop a foster carers and Supervising Social Workers review report.
2. To ensure the dispute resolution process is embedded in Liquid Logic so that the IRO voice is visible in the child's file around escalations.
3. To continue to implement and review the IRO Service Improvement Plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Platkiw'.

Alison Platkiw  
Service Manager (IRO Service)

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**Corporate Parenting Board - 15 November 2021**

<b>Title of paper:</b>	Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2021-2023	
<b>Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):</b>	Helen Watson, Interim Director for Children's Integrated Services Catherine Underwood, Corporate Director for People	<b>Wards affected:</b> All
<b>Report author(s) and contact details:</b>	Treza Mann, Interim Service Manager for Children in Care and Leaving Care Services. Sameer Patel, Interim Team Manager Leaving Care Service	
<b>Other colleagues who have provided input:</b>	Tajinder Madahar, Head of Duty, Housing Aid, Children in Care and Leaving Care Services.	
<b>Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant)</b>		
<b>Does this report contain any information that is exempt from publication?</b> No		
<b>Relevant Council Plan Key Outcome:</b>		
Clean and Connected Communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Keeping Nottingham Working	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Carbon Neutral by 2028	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Safer Nottingham	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Child-Friendly Nottingham	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Healthy and Inclusive	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Keeping Nottingham Moving	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Improve the City Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Better Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial Stability	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Serving People Well	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):</b>		
<p>This report outlines Nottingham City Council's priorities and actions outlined in the Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy for 2021-2023.</p> <p>A copy of the full draft strategy report is attached</p>		
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>		
<b>1</b>	To note the outline of the Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy.	

**1 Reasons for recommendations**

- 1.1 As Corporate Parents, we are required to publish a Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy, to outline how we will work together to deliver good support and services for this cohort of vulnerable children and young people.

## **2 Background (including outcomes of consultation)**

### **Leadership Changes**

- 2.1 Following the sad loss earlier this year of our Director Helen Blackman, Helen Watson has been serving as the Interim Director and we are grateful to her for her leadership during these difficult times. We are pleased to announce the appointment of the new Director for Children's Integrated Services, Ailsa Barr, who will be joining us in January 2022. In addition, Tajinder Madahar who is the Head of Service for Children's Duty, Children in Care, Leaving Care and Housing Aid will be retiring at the end of this year. We acknowledge and thank Tajinder for her many years of service in Nottingham. We are currently recruiting to fill the post.

### **Covid-19**

- 2.2 During the Covid19 Pandemic and resulting lockdowns the Local Authority has followed Government guidance to ensure the safety of our children and young people. Our young people, our staff and the professional network have remained our priority. There has been continued and managed use of PPE in day to day practice. The workforce is now continuing a hybrid model of working which means colleagues are coming into the office once or twice a week.
- 2.3 The statutory visits by social workers have continued face to face, however during the restricted measures of lockdown, some young people expressed preference to continue with virtual means, where the engagement has improved. However, social workers have expressed the importance of seeing their young people, completing direct work with them when undertaking visits as a way of capturing 'the voice of the child'.

### **Strategy (Survey Feedback)**

- 2.4 The Have Your Say survey previously identified three specific areas for further focus through Children in Care Council meetings. Progress against these areas has been impacted by Covid, however is a priority focus going forward.
- 2.5 There is a meeting scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021 with the Children in Care Council, (this was briefly discussed at their last meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2021), with good representation of young people of all ages, and which is being held at Loxley House in the evening. Unfortunately, the meeting scheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021 did not take place, due to low turnout response and the half term holidays.

#### **a) Changing the culture of care**

We are working towards ensuring that children in care have stability through permanent living arrangements. We have established a tracking system to identify all children in care who have been in a stable placement for 12 months to consider if the carer is able to offer permanency through long term fostering for the child if it is in their interest. We are able to address barriers to achieving this. We are assessing the potential for children to return to their parents or wider family through 2 projects; STARS and Reunification. Each one has staff who work closely with children, young people and families to support with the transition and permanency.

#### **b) Improving opportunities for children in care and care leavers to prepare for independent living and successful adulthood**

Through a newly established Transitions Panel we are identifying the support young people may need to assist with their independence plan. Through this work we are identifying additional support that can be accessed with referrals to Adult Services post 18, Aspirations Champion, ASDAN, and the Local Offer.

**c) Supporting the Have Your Say survey**

We are engaging more care experienced children and care leavers to support as peer interviewers to encourage more children in care and care leaver to share their views, experiences and ideas for change.

**Mind of my own**

- 2.6 Nottingham City is currently also using Mind Of My Own, an app designed to help further capture children and young people's voice in a digital forum. The use of the app by children in care remains low and we need to understand the barriers. We are continuing to roll out training on the use of Mind of My Own to frontline staff, including the training for Independent Reviewing Officers who chair our children in care reviews so that they can promote the use of the App. We have also worked with foster carers to increase their confidence in the use of the App so that they can support children in care to have their wishes and feelings heard. We have regular monthly meetings, to support the use of Mind of My Own.

**Looked After Reviews**

- 2.7 Children in care have regular reviews taking place to make sure the care arrangements are meeting their needs and to make sure their care plans are progressing at the pace they should. In May 2020 91.7% of reviews were taking place in timescale and in September this rose 94.6% which is good.
- 2.8 Independent Reviewing Officers continue to support and encourage young people to chair their own meetings or set their own agendas where appropriate. Independent Reviewing Officers make a conscious effort to further increase the participation of children by undertaking child friendly reviews, which are individualised to each child's needs and abilities. Furthermore, children are reassured in between reviews or before the review starts to give them the confidence needed to participate fully in their own review.

**The impact of the Virtual School**

- 2.9 The role of the Virtual School is to monitor, support and provide interventions to ensure that children in care achieve the best possible educational outcomes.
- 2.10 The Virtual School moved to having an electronic Personal Education Plan (ePEP) in November 2020, which requires the PEP to be updated each term. Full training has been provided to frontline social workers and we have seen significant improvement with the latest performance for ePEPs in our latest Summer 2021 report 88% of pupils had completed a PEP this is an improvement from our Spring 2021 at 86%.
- 2.11 Social workers and Virtual School colleagues have found that the electronic version has improved the engagement and performance with young people and our education partners.

## **Health Outcomes**

2.12 Making sure that children in care have had a health assessment and dental and opticians check in timescale has been a particular challenge during the Covid pandemic. Dental practices were shut for a significant period and whilst treatment continued to be offered, dental checks were not possible. We are committed to ensuring that this improves with the relaxing of restrictions.

2.13 In Sept 2021, our performance headlines in relation to health were as follows:

- 80.0% of children in care have had a health assessment recorded in the last 12 months (6 months if they are 5 years and under)
- 61.5% of children in care have had a dental check recorded in the last 12 months
- 75% of children in care have had a strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) recorded in the last 12 months.

## **CAMHS**

2.14 The CAMHS Children in Care team comprises social workers as well as staff from other disciplines such as psychology, psychiatry and other health disciplines. The CAMHS Children in Care team provides a specialist service and training to support and maintain the emotional and mental health needs of our young people. The team ensures the emotional health needs of young people are reflected in Health Plans and are part of the review process.

2.15 Care Leavers have been identified as a priority group for the Nottingham City Integrated Care Partnership, which is a joint City Council/Health led body that coordinates strategic development work across local services. One of the priorities we have just begun to work on is to revise the process for transitions for young people from CAMHS to adult mental health services.

## **The Placement Service**

2.16 The Children's Placement Service is the single point of access for the formation and quality assurance of care placements. The Service is responsible for providing every child and young person with the best possible placement, which meets their needs, wishes and feelings and provides them with the opportunity to thrive and achieve. At Nottingham City Council during 2018/19 we expanded our internal residential and semi-independent provision and we continue to progress our ambitious plans for further expansion.

2.17 In August 2021, 67% of children in care were placed in foster placements. Of those placements, 54.1% were with city council foster carers. This is a consequence of focussed recruitment activity and a recent appointed team manager overlooking the service who will maintain and increase in the number of children placed with family members.

## **Reunification**

- 2.18 The Reunification social worker and the therapeutic family support worker work closely with families and young person to ensure a smooth transition home, whilst assessments are being completed as part of parallel planning.

## **STARS Project**

- 2.19 The project aims to support stepping down from residential care into foster care to enable children and young people to experience family life.

## **Leaving Care Service**

- 2.20 The Leaving Care Service fulfils the Local Authority's statutory duties to young people who are transitioning towards or have left care.
- 2.21 Following the extension of statutory duties in 2018, the service continues to support care leavers aged 21-25 years, with approximately 60 young people returning to request support between April and October 2021.

## **Care Leavers Local Offer**

- 2.22 The Local Offer is uploaded to the Ask Lion webpage to support Care Leavers, setting out the services on offer from both the Local Authority and its partners <https://www.asklion.co.uk/kb5/nottingham/directory/advice.page?id=wtrOogIUhDY> . The offer continues to develop, with opportunities such as the Aspirations Champions Network now being added.
- 2.23 A number of care leavers who have experienced struggles with their mental health have participated in recent commissioning work to improve the Local Authority's offer in respect of placement choice / providers.

## **Independent Living Skills**

- 2.24 The Leaving Care Service is a registered centre for the delivery of ASDAN courses and awards. These provide young people with the opportunity to develop their skills and achieve a wide range of accredited certificates that support their aspirations. The Leaving Care Service have been involved in the development of this course with ASDAN, and a series of training to initially support our internal foster carers and children's residential staff is being rolled out between September and November 2021.
- 2.25 The Employability Training & Support Coordinator identifies our care leavers who are in most need of support and manages referrals, creating a package of appropriate activities and support around each young person that best meets their needs. This has also included close links with alternative provision providers to support young people into college and training, such as Catch 22, Enable, People Plus, and Access Training. Whilst opportunities were restricted by Covid-19 over the past 18 months, the programme is currently performing well above expected outcomes.
- 2.26 Nine young people started University this September, increasing the total number of Nottingham City Care Leavers currently studying at university to 27.

- 2.27 Aspiration Champions Network continues to progress, which has now recruited 18 volunteer “Aspiration Champions” from across the Council and its partners. The scheme will support our work around increasing opportunities for Nottingham City Care Leavers to progress into sustained education, training and employment, by creating more work experience and work tasters internally within the City Council.

### **CIC Police Officers and Youth Justice Service**

- 2.28 Nottingham City have two established Children in Care Police Officers (CICPO) posts which continue to be jointly funded by Nottinghamshire Police and Nottingham City Council. These posts were created to reduce the criminalisation of children in care and care leavers.
- 2.29 The Youth Justice Service work closely with young people who have or are at risk of getting into trouble as a consequence of criminal behaviour. The Youth Justice Service (and its partners) work hard to prevent offending and re-offending behaviour. It has been effective in its efforts to do this through its use of Restorative Justice (RJ).

### **3 Other options considered in making recommendations**

- 3.1 None

### **4 Finance colleague comments (including implications and value for money/VAT)**

- 4.1 None

### **5 Legal and Procurement colleague comments (including risk management issues, and legal, Crime and Disorder Act and procurement implications)**

- 5.1 None

### **6 Strategic Assets & Property colleague comments (for decision relating to all property assets and associated infrastructure) (Area Committee reports only)**

- 6.1 None

### **7 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 7.1 Has the equality impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?  
No X  
An EIA is not required because the report is for noting:

### **8 List of background papers other than published works or those disclosing confidential or exempt information**

- 8.1 None

### **9 Published documents referred to in compiling this report**

- 9.1 None



# Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2021 – 2023

## Valuing the Future of Our Children in Care and Care Leavers



Safer, cleaner  
**Nottingham**  
A city we're all proud of



**Nottingham**  
City Council

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# Our Leadership Team



**Catherine Underwood**  
Corporate Director of  
People



**Councillor Cheryl  
Barnard**  
Portfolio Holder for  
Children & Young  
People

**Helen Watson**  
Interim Director,  
Children's Integrated  
Services



**John Matravers**  
Strategic Lead for  
Safeguarding  
Partnerships

**Mary-Anne Cosgrove**  
Head of Service for  
Children in Care  
Regulated Services



**Tracey Nurse**  
Head of Children's  
Social Care



**Tajinder Madahar**  
Head of Children's Duty  
And Targeted  
Services



**Wilf Fearon**  
Head of Early Help  
Services



**Sophie Russell**  
Head of Children's  
Strategy and  
Improvement

Following the sad loss earlier this year of our Director Helen Blackman, Helen Watson has been serving as the Interim Director and we are grateful to her for her leadership during these difficult times. We are pleased to announce the appointment of the new Director for Children's Integrated Services, Ailsa Barr, who will be joining us in January 2022. In addition, Tajinder Madahar who is the Head of Service for Children's Duty, Children in Care, Leaving Care and Housing Aid will be retiring at the end of this year, a replacement will be recruited to this position.

### **Covid 19**

During the Covid19 Pandemic and resulting lockdowns the Local Authority has followed Government guidance to ensure the safety of our children and young people, our staff, the professional network has remained our priority. There has been continued and managed use of PPE in day to day practice. The workforce is now continuing a hybrid model of working which means colleagues are coming into the office once or twice a week.

The statutory visits by social workers have continued face to face, however during the restricted measures of Lockdown, some young people expressed preference to continue with virtual means, where the engagement has improved. However, social workers have expressed the importance of seeing their young people, completing direct work with them when undertaking visits as a way of capturing 'the voice of the child'.

## Welcome to our Plan

In Nottingham we recognise children are ordinarily best cared for within their birth family and we have developed a range of services to help where families are struggling. Some children cannot be cared for in their birth families or wider network, and come into the care of the local authority. For this group of children and young people we have a responsibility, as corporate parents, to provide care and to work with partner agencies to best meet their needs and prepare them for their future.

As corporate parents, we are responsible for ensuring children who come into our care experience safe and positive parenting, are helped to achieve their full potential and pursue their aspirations.

In order for our children to achieve the best possible outcomes, it is essential that all agencies involved in caring and supporting them work together effectively. This requires a strategy that clearly states areas that require improvement or attention (i.e. our strategic priorities) and what actions will be taken to address these. Ensuring that children in care and care leavers are happy, cared for and properly supported is one of the most important things that we do at Nottingham City Council.

This strategy is based on areas where we have made promises to children in care and care leavers, and have been developed in partnership with our young people. The strategic priorities identified within this strategy have also been aligned to Children's Integrated Services Directorate priorities and to statutory guidance. Working together in this way will help us to ensure that our children and young people, and those who care for them, get the right help at the right time. In order to do this, we have condensed our strategic priorities set out below into seven areas of promise for our children and care leavers.

Our vision is for a city where every child and young person can enjoy their childhood in a warm and supporting environment, free from poverty and safe from harm; a city where every child grows up to achieve their full potential. We want to ensure that all of our children in care and care leavers have the right home and support to keep them safe and well. We strive to help them grow into happy, healthy, successful and fulfilled young adults who are optimistic about their future. We recognise that it is essential we help children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by Nottingham City Council and our partners.

Helen Watson  
Interim Director, Children's Integrated Services



Councillor Cheryl Barnard

Tajinder Madahar  
Head of Children in Care

Catherine Underwood

## What Is Corporate Parenting?

In Nottingham City we support the view set out by the Department for Education (DfE) regarding Corporate Parenting principles, which states:

The role that councils play in looking after children is one of the most important things they do. Local authorities have a unique responsibility to the children they look after and their care leavers (relevant and former relevant children). In this context local authorities are often referred to as being the 'corporate parent' of these children and young people, and the critical question that local authorities should ask in adopting such an approach is: **'would this be good enough for my child?'**.



We believe that children in care have the same needs – to be loved, cared for and feel safe - as other children. We also recognise that there are unique challenges that children in care and care leavers face. We are committed to ensuring that corporate parenting principles are embedded in the wider work of the City Council so we work collectively to address these challenges.

It is our role as corporate parents, to advocate on behalf of children in care and care leavers, and to empower them to make their own decisions in preparation for adulthood. We want all of our children in care and care leavers to achieve their full potential and obtain the best possible outcomes, the same outcomes that we would expect for our own children.

Nottingham City Council has around 700 children in its care at any one time for whom we are the Corporate Parent. Councillor Cheryl Barnard, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, chairs the Corporate Parenting Board that provides oversight and challenge in relation to all matters involving children in Nottingham City Council's care.

The Corporate Parenting Board is held six times each civic year and is attended by elected members, relevant internal colleagues and contributors from external agencies. The Corporate Parenting Board is informed annually by the Have Your Say survey, which is distributed to all children in care and care leavers for feedback on how they think Children's Services are performing.

Target areas for deeper analysis and action are identified through the survey, which shapes the priorities of the Corporate Parenting Board over the following year.

The guidance from the DfE identifies seven principles which should underpin the role of the Corporate Parent:

1. **to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people.**
2. **to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.**
3. **to consider the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.**
4. **to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.**
5. **to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.**
6. **for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.**
7. **to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.**

It is important to set the Corporate Parenting principles in the context of our wider priorities for the work we do with children and families.

## Our Priorities.

1. **Ensure the right children get the right support at the right time**

We want to ensure issues are identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity. Our response will be proportionate and solution-focused.

## **2. Create a responsive and flexible system**

We want to ensure that children and their families experience a system that does not stop and start but is simple and streamlined.

## **3. Help families help themselves**

We want to build resilience in families, not dependence.

## **4. Work in partnership with children and their families**

We will listen to the views of children and their families. To address challenges, we will work to build on a family's strengths.

## **5. Focus resources on what will make a positive difference**

We will work more smartly, ensuring our resources (workforce and finance) efficiently deliver a measurable improvement.

## **To encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.**

### **Have Your Say Survey 2018- 2019**

Each year, we circulate the Have Your Say Survey to all of our children in care and care leavers. Launched in 2011, responses to the survey help us gauge how well we are performing against our priorities in the Children in Care and Care Leavers Charter. The survey can be returned by the social worker or completed online. There is also an 'easy read' version available to all of our children, to allow all of them to complete the survey.

### **Survey Feedback**

There is a meeting scheduled for 18th October 2021 with the Children in Care Council, (this was briefly discussed at their last meeting on 27th September 2021), with good representation of young people of all ages, and which is being held during half term at Loxley.

Although each year the survey helps us focus on the key issues for children in care and care leavers there are some issues which are regularly highlighted as being important:

- Ensuring young people know about advocacy and complaints services so that we can be confident they have the support to make their voice heard.
- Ensuring that young people have the right place to live as quickly as possible.
- Ensuring that we do all we can to prevent changes in a young person's life unless they are absolutely necessary to keep the child or young person safe and well. We know that a change of home, carer, social worker or school can be a difficult experience for children and young people.

- Ensuring we provide all the help our children and young people need, to plan for and achieve a successful journey into independent adulthood.
  - Based on the 18/19 results, three specific areas were identified for further focus through Children in Care Council meetings. Whilst progress against these have been impacted by Covid, they remain our focus:
1. **Changing the culture of care**, we are working towards ensuring that children in care have stability through permanent living arrangements. We have established a way in which we identify children who have been in a stable foster placement, for instance, for 12 months to consider if the carer is able to offer permanency through long term fostering for the children if it is something they wish for and is in their interest. We are able to address any barriers to achieving this. We are assessing the potential for children to return to their parents or wider family through 2 projects; STARS and Reunification, each one has colleagues who work closely with children, young people and families to support with transition and permanency. We are spreading the responsibility for being corporate parents to more agencies and partners, so that everyone plays their part in helping our children in care and care leavers do well in life.
  2. **Improving opportunities for children in care and care leavers** to prepare for independent living and successful adulthood, through greater support and access to services that help improve their life skills, achieve academic attainment and experiences of work; and develop their social confidence, positive friendships and supportive networks. Through a newly established Transitions Panel we are identifying the support young people may need to assist with their independence plan. Through this work we are identifying additional support that can be accessed with referrals to Adult Services post 18, Aspirations Champion, ASDAN, and the Local Offer
  3. **Older children in care and care leavers**- supporting the completion of the Have your Say Survey as peer interviewers, to encourage more children in care and care leavers to share their views, experiences and ideas for change. More opportunities for care experienced young people to be involved in training of social workers and foster carers, and participate in recruitment processes for Children's Social Care staff. Although this survey was an electronic version due to Covid 19, it had limited success, therefore the PA's have encouraged care leavers to visit the office and speak to them on a 1-1 level to complete their survey. Going forward we are recognising that a range of approaches to seek feedback is necessary.

## Mind of My Own App

Nottingham City is currently also using Mind Of My Own, an app designed to help further capture children and young people's voice in a digital forum. The use of the app by children in care remains low and we need to understand the barriers. We are continuing to roll out training on the use of Mind of My Own to frontline staff, including the training for Independent Reviewing Officers who chair our Children in Care Reviews so that they can promote the use of the App. We have also worked with foster carers to increase their confidence in the use of the App so that they can

support children in care to have their wishes and feelings heard. We have regular monthly meetings, to support the use of Mind of My Own.

## Our Internal Services and Partner Agencies

### Social Work Support for Children in Care

The Local Authority's social work support for children in care is provided by one of four types of social care teams. These are:

- Children's Social Care Duty
- Children's Social Care Fieldwork Teams
- Children in Care Teams
- The Whole Life Disability Service

Children's Social Care Duty teams work with children and young people for short periods of time when they are first identified as needing a social worker. Where a child or young person needs longer-term support they will move to Children's Fieldwork, who, amongst other areas of work, support children in need of social work support, children subject to a child protection plan and those children and young people subject to care proceedings.

Nottingham City has three Children in Care Teams. They work solely with children in care from 0 up to 18 years old who have a long term plan of remaining in care. Having dedicated children in care teams promotes specialism and expertise. This, we believe, leads to better outcomes for our young people. We also have a dedicated Permanency Team which primarily supports those children for whom the best outcome is adoption, or another form of permanence.

The Whole Life Disability Services is an integrated service, which includes social workers with specialist knowledge in the area of childhood disability. The team undertake a number of duties, including those associated with meeting the Authority's statutory requirements in relation to severely disabled children in care. The Whole Life Disability team only work with a relatively small number of children in care.

### Children in Care Services

We are always trying to do more to ensure that all children in care are healthy and safe, have the same opportunities as their peers and can move successfully into adulthood. Children, young people and carers are likely to be supported by a number of different teams as they move through the care process. Whilst we know that this can cause some disruption we think it is important that the support on offer changes as the needs of the child or young person develop.

This section seeks to outline the roles and responsibilities of those teams that work with our children in care and care leavers.

## **Residential Services**

Nottingham City currently has six mainstream residential homes, one home dedicated to children with complex needs and 5 semi-independent units for young people who are 16 years and over. Additionally, we have a dedicated short breaks home for 11 children and young adults with learning and physical disabilities.

All our homes are safe and welcoming and we are proud to provide high quality care. In October 2021 all of our homes are judged good or outstanding by Ofsted.

Every effort is made to provide children and young people with the necessary support needed for them to achieve the best outcomes possible. All units are subject to regular quality assurance, both internally and externally, in order to ensure all young people, receive the same high quality care.

## **Looked After Reviews**

Children in care have regular reviews taking place to make sure the care arrangements are meeting their needs and to make sure their care plans are progressing at the pace they should. In May 2020 91.7% of reviews were taking place in timescale and in September this rose 94.6% which is good.

Children and young people participate in their reviews in a number of ways including attending the meeting, completing the contribution paper or for some having contact either by telephone, email or a home visit with the Independent Reviewing Officer before their review was held. The Independent Reviewing Officer is responsible for chairing these reviews.

During the period affected by Covid, face to face contact was restricted and therefore an increasing number of meetings took place through virtual meetings. Feedback from children in care suggests that some young people preferred this method of engagement.

Independent Reviewing Officers continue to support and encourage young people to chair their own meetings or set their own agenda's where appropriate. Independent Reviewing Officers make a conscious effort to further increase the participation of children by undertaking child friendly reviews, which are individualised to each child's needs and abilities. Furthermore, children are reassured in between reviews or before the review starts to give them the confidence needed to participate fully in their own review.

To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people, we believe that aspiration is really important for children in care and care leavers. We know that many of these young people will achieve great things and make a fantastic contribution to society. That said, some young people will have had life experiences that make it

difficult for them to recognise their potential and we have put in place a series of measures to help young people and their Carers with this.

Each year we have two events that celebrate the achievements of children in care and a further event that celebrates the achievements of care leavers. These events are called “Big it up” and really positive experiences for all of those who are involved.

To complement ‘Big it Up’ our Virtual School have engaged us with a national organisation who deliver a project called Unlock. This is led by someone who was in care themselves and connects children in care and puts young people in contact with national leaders from a range of industries. Young people then go on to speak to local people about the support they may be able to offer with their aspirations. The final element of the process involves young people delivering a presentation about their experience to a group including carers, social workers and teaching staff.

### **The impact of the Virtual School**

The role of the Virtual School is to monitor, support and provide interventions to ensure that children in care achieve the best possible educational outcomes.

The Virtual School works with a network of Designated Teachers who are dedicated to ensuring that our children achieve the best they can in line with all other children.

Nottingham City Virtual School is a statutory service that supports and monitors the education of children in care and previously looked-after children. Their mission is to champion the educational needs of these children, helping them to achieve the best possible outcomes.

The Virtual School provides advice and support to professionals working with Nottingham City children in care and children who reside in the Nottingham local authority area who have previously been looked-after. They work closely with teachers, school governors, social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers, parents and carers.

The service monitors the educational provision, attendance, progress and attainment for all Nottingham City children in care, irrespective of where they are placed. The Virtual School aims to: promote achievement, raise attainment and ensure equality of opportunity to enhance the life chances of all children in care. They play a strategic role in ensuring the corporate parenting responsibilities of the local authority are met, with regard to the education of children in care.

2019 saw a significant decline in the number of children achieving expected educational levels at Key stage 2. This decrease was seen to be across all academic areas of achievement. The Virtual School will be looking to capture the journey/progress of children through the system starting at Key stage 1, this should address this issue for future cohorts. The head of the virtual school is currently in the process of exploring the contextual information for each child in this

cohort in order to develop strategies to address this gap for these children in order to support them in their educational attainment moving forward.

Virtual School moved to having an electronic Personal Education Plan (ePEP) in November 2020, which requires the PEP to be updated each term. Full training has been provided to frontline social workers and we have seen significant improvement with the latest performance for ePEPs in the Summer of 2021 report 88% of pupils had completed a PEP this is an improvement from our Spring 2021 at 86%.

Social workers and Virtual School colleagues have found that the electronic version has improved the engagement and performance with young people and our education partners.

The Virtual school have identified key areas for improvement as follows:

To get PEPs for 16 year olds onto the ePEP portal, as these are still done on paper

Training to be provided to colleagues in respect to the education of children in care and previously looked after children and includes information on the roles and responsibilities of professionals, PEPs, SEND, exclusions, attendance and Pupil Premium Plus (PPP).

<b>Result (CLA 12 months plus)</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
Attainment 8 Average Point	21.1	18.9	20.5	17.9
Progress 8 Average	-0.93	-1.09	-1.10	NR
KS4 % achieving level 4 pass in English and Maths	26.7%	17.9%	20.5%	19.2%
KS4 % achieving level 5 pass in English and Maths	c	c	c	c

c = suppressed due to low number of pupils attaining

NR = Not Recorded

Data source

SFR - CLA outcomes (25th March 2021)

Data for 2021 will be made available March 2022

As of October 2021, 64.97% of care leavers (aged 17 to 21 years) are in employment, education or training; this was above our local target of 55% and the most up to date comparative data from other authorities. This is an improvement from July 2020 when 53.9% were in employment, education or training.

### **Further and Higher Education.**

We have worked with local providers to develop support for children in care who may want to attend university and/or college:



We understand that sometimes it is hard for our young people to enrol at college so Nottingham College offers them the chance to enrol at a different time if they want to. Nottingham College will also provide the following:

- Access to an Achievement Coach, wellbeing support and health advice.
- Support through the college and the personal advisor to support attendance.
- A named person to support in getting an appropriate work placement or work experience.
- Support to visit the colleges to find out more.

For young people who want to go to university:

- We provide a Higher Education (HE) bursary of at least £2,000 and we will help to consider how this is best spent.
- We provide somewhere for young people to stay during University holidays (or funding for this if they prefer to make their own arrangements in the holidays). This is for 21 weeks of non-term time rent.

Nottingham Trent University and Nottingham University offer the following through their Growing Lives Programme:

- Campus visits and/or additional welcome activities.
- Bursary for financial support of £500.
- Dedicated support officer to help you while you are at University.
- A guaranteed offer of University-allocated accommodation for those who accept a place at Nottingham Trent University as their first choice.

Further information about this support is available in our Care Leavers Local Offer, This was developed with and for Care Leavers during 2018. The Care Leavers Local Offer can be found here: [www.asklion.co.uk/careleavers](http://www.asklion.co.uk/careleavers).

## **Jobs**

If a young person feels ready to find a job we will support them by:

- Making sure they have access to the Leaving Care Service employability programme to make positive steps towards training and employment. The programme is recognised by the DWP as a genuine job seeking provision for care leavers. The programme provides opportunities that aim to build confidence so that young people feel able to move onto training or employment. They are involved in all aspects of planning programmes which could involve a mentor.
- Offering delivery of ASDAN courses where young people will have the opportunity to achieve employability qualifications (from entry level to level 2).

## **Work Experience**

Sometimes if a young person is not quite sure what they want to do, work experience can help them make a decision. Our care leavers thought this would be a good idea so we have worked with education providers in the city to help give them a range of work experience opportunities. For example, the Work Inspiration scheme at Nottingham Trent University runs throughout the year and provides opportunities across a wide range of work experiences. In addition, Nottingham College will, where possible, seek work placement or experience opportunities for care leavers not enrolled at the college. The DWP also offer work experience and we are continually looking to expand the range of opportunities we are able to offer.

We will be able to set up more work experience and work tasters internally within the City Council. This will be coordinated via the Aspirations Champion referrals and our internal education, employment and training co-ordinator, ETSCO, with support from our dedicated Futures workers at Leaving Care.

## **Apprenticeships**

Apprenticeships are a really good way of getting into work. In Nottingham there are lots of opportunities for apprenticeships with Nottingham City Council, Nottingham City Homes as well as other businesses. Nottingham City Council know that these are hard to get so will make sure that young people and their Personal Advisors are told about any apprenticeship opportunities within the City Council at the same time as going to our recruitment agency. Young people will also be offered support. This would include regular review meetings with apprentice managers and Personal Advisers; and where needed, access to the additional support e.g. Maths / English support, resilience coaching and mentoring sessions.

We will also provide additional support by:

- Making sure that any apprenticeship assessments or interviews are at a place that is right for the young person.
- Helping with transport costs to attend interviews for training, school/college, apprenticeships or job interviews.
- Preparation for interviews and where appropriate financial support to purchase suitable interview clothing.



## **Health Provision**

The Greater Nottinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) commission the specialist Children in Care medical and nursing teams to undertake statutory health assessments. This ensures that any physical or emotional needs are addressed as part of the care plan. The health professional will share recommendations for the plan with the child and / or young person's social

worker and advise on how to meet any outstanding health needs. For those children and young people placed too far out of Nottingham City boundaries, arrangements will be made with an external health provider to complete assessments and those assessments will be quality assured to ensure they meet an accepted standard. The teams also contribute to supporting the health assessments for those children and young people who are placed in Nottinghamshire from other local authorities.

Nottingham City Council commission public health services for children and young people, including the 0 – 19 programme which incorporates the delivery of the Department of Health “healthy child programme”. This service works with the specialist Children in Care teams. This ensures that the universal and public health needs of children in care are met by appropriately skilled and knowledgeable practitioners.

## **Health Outcomes**

Making sure that children in care have had a health assessment and dental and opticians check in timescale has been a particular challenge during the Covid pandemic. Dental practices were shut for a significant period and whilst treatment continued to be offered, dental checks were not possible. We are committed to ensuring that this improves with the relaxing of some restrictions.

In Sept 2021, our performance headlines in relation to health were as follows:

- 80.0% of children in care have had a health assessment recorded in the last 12 months (6 months if they are 5 years and under).
- 61.5% of children in care have had a dental check recorded in the last 12 months
- 75% of children in care have had a strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) recorded in the last 12 months.

Social Workers and carers are following through with appointments for health assessments, we have seen some improvement in dental checks, but this needs to be further improved, there has been positive dialogue with our health partners, to rectify this, now restrictions have been lifted. Our fostering service are looking at how they can support through our foster carers making sure these checks occur in a timely way.

## **Children in Care CAMHS**

A dedicated Children in Care CAMHS service is jointly commissioned by the Greater Notts CCG and Nottingham City Local Authority to support with emotional and mental health needs of children in care. The team provides a specialist service and training to support and maintain the emotional and mental health needs of our young people. The team also ensures the emotional health needs of young people are reflected in care planning.

The CAMHS Children in Care team comprises of social workers as well as staff from other disciplines such as psychology, psychiatry and other health disciplines. The CAMHS Children in Care team provides a specialist service and training to support and maintain the emotional and mental health needs of our young people. The team ensures the emotional health needs of young people are reflected in Health Plans and are part of the review process.

They work in a range of different ways including offering consultation support for the network that supports children in care, offering a reflective space to think about the child's history. They also offer direct therapeutic support for some children in care, support groups for foster carers and training. They will also offer support to identify individual therapy for children, where this is needed.

Care Leavers have been identified as a priority group for the Nottingham City Integrated Care Partnership, which is joint City Council/Health led body that coordinates strategic development work across local services. One of the priorities we have just begun to work on is to revise the process for transitions for young people from CAMHS to adult mental health services.

In Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City a CIC Multi-Agency Service Improvement Forum coordinates activity to improve the health outcomes of children and young people from entering to leaving care. The forum consists of representatives from the clinical commissioning groups, both local authorities, health providers and commissioners of services and an action plan supports the outcomes being achieved. The forum acknowledges that to meet the health needs of children in care and care leavers a partnership approach is required.



**For children and young people to experience good physical, emotional and mental health and well-being we will:**

- Ensure timely referrals are made for statutory health assessments including those young people who are close to leaving care

- Ensure any health recommendations identified within the statutory health assessment are actioned and monitored as part of the children in care review process
- Ensure the health needs of those children and young people placed out of area are met equally to those remaining in Nottingham City
- Ensure that those young people leaving care receive their health history and know where to access their own health information in the future
- Ensure those young people leaving care receive support around meeting their own emotional and physical health needs into adulthood.
- Undertake a strategic health needs assessment for looked after children and care leavers, and use the assessment to inform the design and delivery of services.

## Fostering

The Fostering Service aims to provide high quality family based care that ensures that children in care receive a positive experience of home and family life.

To achieve this, we recruit, assess, train and support foster carers to care for children so they achieve the best possible outcomes in regards to their physical, emotional and intellectual development. A variety of foster carers are recruited and trained to meet the diverse needs of children and reflect the ethnic and cultural background of the community we serve. We offer a full and comprehensive training programme to equip carers to be able to meet the complex needs of children in our care.

All foster carer applicants are rigorously screened, and carefully trained provide safe and children in care and adoption.



applicants are thoroughly assessed so that they can provide supportive homes for children placed for

## Permanence

We understand that when children come into care it is really important that we make decisions about the long term plan for them as soon as possible. Where possible we will work with their immediate and extended family to support them to return home. This may be supported by one of our specialist services such as Multi-Systemic Therapy, Targeted Family Support Team or by organising a Family Network Meeting, which brings family members together to develop their own plan.

If a child cannot return home, then we will try to find a family who can care for them throughout their childhood. For those who are young enough we will pursue adoption as the best outcome for them.

In order to increase the number of potential adoptive families available for our children we have worked with colleagues across the East Midlands, particularly with colleagues from Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Derby City, to develop a Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption East Midlands. This became operational in April 2019. Adoption East Midlands leads on work to recruit, train, approve and support adoptive carers. Nottingham City Council will remain responsible for supporting children and young people with adoption plans and helping them move on. To help us with this work we have developed a Permanence Team, who lead on our work with children with adoption plans.

Where adoption is not the right plan for a child we will try to provide them with a long-term foster placement. This



requires the young person and foster carer agreeing that this is the right place for them to live throughout their childhood. Plans are considered and agreed by the Head of Service for Children in Care or in some circumstances the Director for Children's Integrated Services, who signs a certificate for the young person to confirm that this is where they will live throughout their childhood.

Permanence is our aspiration for children and young people that will give a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment, identity and belonging.

We strive to promote permanence which ensures that young people have a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond. It is also important to remember that older children and young people also need to achieve permanence in their lives although they may not wish (for a variety of reasons) to be in a foster home or to be adopted. For example, they may prefer to live in a children's home where they can also achieve a sense of security and belonging.

Twin Track or Concurrent Planning - Social workers are encouraged to work towards a child's return home whilst at the same time developing an alternative Permanence Plan, within tight timescales.

## **Long-term Care**

For those children who remain in care, an important route to permanence is long-term foster care. Where the permanence plan for the child is long-term foster care this may be where the current short-term foster placement is assessed to meet the long term needs of the child for permanence or where a new placement is identified for a child as a result of an assessment and matching process. Where a child is placed with long term carers, it is important that the child has access to the friends, family or community within which they were brought up if possible and which form part of their identity and their long term support network.

## **Reunification**

The aim:

- To identify those children who have a long term plan of remaining in care until independence, and to consider for them if reunification back to parents/wide family may be achieved.
- Track progress for each young person referred to the Reunification team where a plan to consider reunification is agreed.
- Provide reports to Sustainability Board on the programme's success.
- Highlight any risks to identify any mitigations/resolutions.

The Reunification Social Worker and the therapeutic Family Support Worker work closely with families and young person to ensure a smooth transition home, whilst assessments are being completed as part of parallel planning.

### **STARS Project**

The project aims to support stepping down from residential care into foster care to enable children and young people to experience family life. They will offer support to stabilise foster placements at risk of disrupting which could lead to children or young people entering residential care placements. The project also supports those children at risk of entering care by supporting them and their families to maintain them at home. They will support the reunification of children and young people from care. They provide an intensive support service up to 2 years in some cases.

### **Connected Person**

We plan early to identify with parents, their wider family or friends who may be able to offer permanence if a return home is clearly not in a child's best interests. We do this to avoid delays later during court proceedings.

### **Special Guardianship**

Special Guardianship addresses the needs of a significant group of children, who need a sense of stability and security within a placement away from their parents but not the absolute legal break with their birth family that is associated with adoption. It can also provide an alternative for achieving permanence in families where adoption, for cultural or religious reasons, is not an option.

### **Post order support**

Support for adopters post order transferred to the Regional Adoption Agency in April 2019. This includes support for adoptive families after the order is granted. We have retained responsibility for support for young people who leave care having been made the subject of a Special Guardianship Order. This function is based in the Permanence team.

### **Stability in our workforce**

We understand that children in care find changes of social worker and independent reviewing officer difficult. We work hard to try to recruit permanent staff. There is a national shortage of social workers that makes it difficult for all Local Authorities to recruit and retain staff, and we are impacted by this challenge.

We have developed a range of initiatives to address this such as encouraging staff from other areas of children's services to undertake social work training, this was through a Grow our own social work development scheme. We have also invested in something called a Frontline programme which supports in the training of social workers who join the authority as paid employees after the first year.

We have also worked on remodelling social work pay to attract more social workers to the Council.

We are starting to see the benefits of these measures but we anticipate that social work recruitment is something we are going to have to continue to focus on for the foreseeable future.

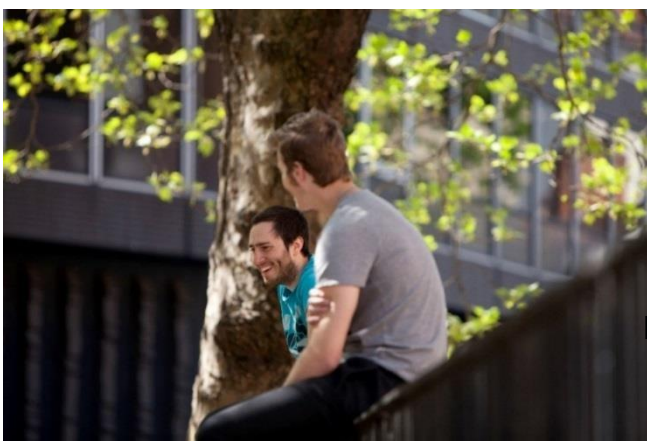
### **Independent Reviewing Officer Service**

The Independent Reviewing Officers Service operates within the framework of the updated version of the IRO handbook, the national guidance of Working Together 2018 and the national guidance for Fostering. We provide each child in care with an independent reviewing officer, to ensure their Human Rights are respected.

The main focus of the IRO is to critically examine and quality assure the Care Planning and interventions of the Local Authority in respect of each child or young person in care. Central to this is ensuring that the child's wishes and feelings are given full consideration in planning and enabling by their role, improved outcomes.

Independent reviewing officers therefore ensure:

- There is robust scrutiny and challenge regarding decisions.
- To challenge the quality of analysis being undertaken, to ensure that plans meets the children's needs.
- That views of children, parents, carers and other professionals are given sufficient weight in care planning.
- That informed reflection occurs on the child's progress and planning for the future.



### **CIC Police Officers and Youth Justice Service**

Since 2006 Nottingham City have had an established Children in Care Police Officer (CICPO) post which continues to be jointly funded by Nottinghamshire Police and

Nottingham City Council. In January 2018 a second CICPO joined us and we are pleased to report that capacity for the role in the City has now been permanently expanded to two Police Officers. It may be noted that in March 2020, Nottinghamshire Police also successfully recruited a CICPO for the County, jointly funded by Nottinghamshire County Council. This provides parity of service and improves outcomes for children across Nottinghamshire.

All of our young people in care have an allocated social worker who will work with a range of services to keep them safe. These services will depend on the needs of the child or young person but could include the Police or Youth Justice Service. If children go missing they will be offered return interviews by someone independent of their placement, so we can try to understand what is causing this behaviour.

The Youth Justice Service work closely with young people who have, or are at risk of getting into trouble as a consequence of criminal behaviour. The Youth Justice Service (and its partners) work hard to prevent offending and re-offending behaviour. It has been effective in its efforts to do this through its use of Restorative Justice (RJ).

Restorative Justice is used to help young people who commit crime to make amends in an effort to repair the damage done and find a positive way forward. Research shows that restorative practice delivers better outcomes for young people across schools, care, community and the Criminal Justice System. In 2016, the Youth Justice Service was awarded the Restorative Justice Council's Restorative Service Quality Mark (RSQM), which recognises professionalism and high standards in RJ practice.

## **Accommodation**

### **The Placement Service**

The Children's Placement Service is the single point of access for the formation and quality assurance of care placements. The Service is responsible for providing every child and young person with the best possible placement, which meets their needs, wishes and feelings and provides them with the opportunity to thrive and achieve.

The Placement Service undertakes activities to ensure that all children and young people are accessing high quality care placements. There is a dedicated Quality Assurance officer post based in the Placement Service

We use a mix of internal local authority recruited foster carers and local authority managed residential homes, as well as commissioned independent fostering agencies (IFAs) and external residential homes. Wherever possible we will place children with our carers or homes as we believe this strengthens the partnership that supports them. In August 2021, 67% of children in

care were placed in foster placements. Of those placements, 54.1% were with City Council Foster Carers. This is a consequence of focussed recruitment activity and a recent appointed team manager overlooking the service who will maintain and increase in the number of children placed with family members.

## **Residential Provision**

At Nottingham City Council during the course of 2018/19 we expanded our internal residential and semi-independent provision. As with internal fostering, internal residential care promotes more effective collaboration between the network of colleagues working with the child, as they will all work for the local authority and share the same working methods required to help children thrive.



When we are looking to place a child in care, our placement service leads to identify the best match for the child. Wherever possible we will prioritise matches with internal services but if this is not possible we have a commissioning framework that helps us identify external options. In February 2020 we moved from a framework that operated across the East Midlands to a more local model that we share with Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Derby City. This is part of our work to try to keep children within their own communities where

possible and safe.

**To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.**

## **Leaving Care Service**

The Leaving Care Service fulfils the Local Authority's statutory duties to young people who are transitioning towards, or have left care. The service provides intensive support and befriending, as well as offering advice, guidance, information, and practical help around all areas of independence, to help them make positive transitions and thrive in adulthood.

As at October 2021, the service is actively supporting 293 care leavers (aged between 16-21 years). This includes some of our most vulnerable care leavers, including 68 asylum seeking young people and a further 14 young people in custody.

Following the extension of statutory duties in 2018, the service continues to support care leavers aged 21-25 years, with approximately 60 young people returning to request support between April and October 2021.

The service aims are:

- To ensure young people are prepared & ready to leave the care system.
- To build positive relationships and offer personal support, where required.
- Listen to young people and include their views in the preparation & planning for leaving care.
- To be honest and realistic in terms of what responsibilities we have towards young people
- To be clear on expectations about money and entitlements.
- Promote opportunities for young people to gain independence and control their own life choices.

## **Care Leavers Local Offer**

The Local Offer is uploaded to the Ask Lion webpage to support Care Leavers, setting out the services on offer from both the Local Authority and its partners <https://www.asklion.co.uk/kb5/nottingham/directory/advice.page?id=wtrOoglUhDY>. The offer continues to develop, with opportunities such as the Aspirations Champions Network now being added (see below).

Following changes introduced through the Children and Social Work Act 2017, Care Leavers will be able to ask for support from a Personal Advisor up to the age of 25, whether they are in education or training or not. We have been asked to complete a survey, something the DfES had committed to review at the time the new requirements came into force. Whilst the DfES had undertaken an assessment of the financial burden, it had been difficult to assess how many young people would continue to want Personal Advisor support. This survey concluded on 27th July 2021 and we await the findings, in addition to continuing to monitor the number of care leavers that are returning to us for support post 21. In addition to this survey the DfES have had a series of “deep dive” discussions with a number of local authorities to collect more detailed information.

## **Independent Living Skills**

The Leaving Care Service is a registered centre for the delivery of ASDAN courses and awards. These provide young people with the opportunity to develop their skills and achieve a wide range of accredited certificates that support their aspirations, and to date has predominantly focused on developing young people’s employability skills. However, this focus has now extended to supporting our Care Leavers to be best prepared and making successful transitions to independent living.

The Independent Living short course provides a structure for young people to develop the knowledge and key skills required to live independently through a series of activities and challenges. The Leaving Care Service have been involved in the development of this course with ASDAN, and a series of training to initially support our internal foster carers and children’s residential staff is being rolled out between September and November 2021. The training will enable foster carers and residential staff to guide and support young people through the course, as well as how to capture the evidence required that can be used to support a young person’s housing application / appointment prior to them turning 18.

Further briefing sessions for IRO’s and Social Workers (Children in Care) are also being rolled out at this time, to ensure that the programme is embedded in our support to young people as

they approach adulthood, better equipping them to leave care with confidence and increased resilience.

### **Nottingham Works 4 You (NW4U)**

The Leaving Care Service have been a delivery partner for the Nottingham Works 4 You (NW4U) programme since April 2021. The programme is recognised and supported by the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) and supports Nottingham City Care Leavers to engage in activities to help them progress into sustainable Education, Employment and Training (EET).

The Employability Training & Support Coordinator identifies our care leavers who are in most need of support and manages referrals, creating a package of appropriate activities and support around each young person that best meets their needs. The programme supports our most vulnerable care leavers by ensuring they are able to meet the criteria for maintaining their Universal Credit claims. The Coordinator works in partnership with a wide range of internal departments, voluntary and community sector organisations to extend training, mentoring and employment opportunities for Nottingham City Care leavers. This has also included close links with alternative provision providers to support young people into college and training, such as Catch 22, Enable, People Plus, and Access Training.

Whilst opportunities were restricted by Covid-19 over the past 18 months, the programme is currently performing well above expected outcomes, with 86 young people accessing the NW4U programme since April 2021 (exceeding the contracted target of 43 by the end of September 2021). 31 of these young people have now moved into Education, Employment or Training (exceeding contracted targets three times over.) This has included a number of young people being supported to apply for 'Kick-start' roles / opportunities within the Local Authority. One care leaver has been offered a 4-week paid placement at Nottingham City Council in the Business Support team, and has aspirations of training to be a social worker in the near future.

### **Equipped2Succeed**

The Leaving Care Service have partnered with Equipped2succeed, a personal development programme with taster sessions in the arts and physical activity that aim to support participants towards a positive future by building confidence and self-belief, communication skills and goal setting. 3 care leavers have completed the last recent 12-week programme.

### **Quotes from the young people:**

*"Equipped to succeed has given me tools to manage stress and emotions. It has motivated me to get out of bed and travel to town to attend and engage with the group."*

*"I have learnt how to be confident and how to build up my future goals to use in my future and how this course has pushed me to ... believe in myself and not put myself down."*

*"This program has reinforced my self-confidence and belief that my writing is worth sharing and publishing. I also feel more able to manage my stress and mental state."*

### **University**

9 young people started University this September, increasing the total number of Nottingham City Care Leavers currently studying at university to 27. This is an exciting time for the Leaving Care Service, as young people are being supported in getting ready to start their journey into Further Education in a wide range of areas, including Biomedical Science, Sports Journalism and Health & Social Care.

### **Aspiration Champions Network**

Development of the Aspiration Champions Network continues to progress, which has now recruited 18 volunteer “Aspiration Champions” from across the Council and its partners. The scheme aims to support care leavers by providing bespoke one-to-one guidance and support around careers and education choices. The 18 Aspiration Champions have now fully signed up and have received training, whilst recruitment for further champions continues. The programme is ready to go live and referrals for young people to be matched are underway.

The scheme will support our work around increasing opportunities for Nottingham City Care Leavers to progress into sustained education, training and employment, by creating more work experience and work tasters internally within the City Council. This will be coordinated through the network referrals and our internal Employability Training & Support Coordinator (ETSC) with support from our dedicated FUTURES workers in the Leaving Care Service.

### **Care Leaver Participation**

17 Care Leavers have actively participated in recent commissioning work to identify new providers of semi-independent placements. All young people took part in discussions with their Personal Advisors about their experiences of living in semi-independent homes and provided their views on what they feel is most important when selecting a provider. 7 young people went on to participate in the next stage of the commissioning process earlier this month, looking at the collective responses and agreeing questions to ask potential providers. These young people will reconvene in October 2021, to participate in marking tender submissions from potential semi-independent providers. All young people have been provided with gift vouchers to thank them for their time.

In addition, a number of Care Leavers who have experienced struggles with their mental health have participated in recent commissioning work to improve the Local Authority's offer in respect of placement choice / providers; in particular, for those who may have experienced a period of detention under the Mental Health Act and require a community setting upon discharge. Personal Advisors have undertaken work with identified young people in supportive environments, to ensure their views are meaningfully represented within this process.

### **Local Data**

92.8% of Care leavers were in suitable accommodation at the start of October 2021. The remaining 7.2% were young people in custody or missing. As at 16<sup>th</sup> October 2021, 89% of care leavers have had Pathway Plans completed within the 6 months preceding this date.

In 2019/2020 there were a total of 22 young people who remained with their foster carers. As at 15<sup>th</sup> October 2021, there were 27 young people in ‘Staying Put’ arrangements, which tells us that more young people (post 18) are being encouraged to stay with their former foster carer as per government guidelines.

## Care Leavers Local Offer

As already mentioned, since 2018, the duty on local authorities to provide Personal Advisor support to all care leavers was extended from 21, to the age of 25. In addition, a duty to consult on and publish their 'local offer' for care leavers, which sets out both care leavers legal entitlements and the additional discretionary support that the local authority provides.

The Leaving Care Service have worked in partnership with a range of internal departments, local organisations, and most importantly children and young people themselves, in developing our local offer. This is now published online, on the Ask Lion website. The offer is continuously developing and regularly bench-marked against the offers of similar authorities. Recent developments include the addition of our Aspiration Champion Network and work experience opportunities within the city council.

When asked for their views, care leavers have commented that they had benefited widely from the Local Offer, including Council Tax exemption, YEI, Staying Put, 'Setting Up Home' allowances, priority access to housing and University support. Several specifically mentioned that they appreciated the support of their PA. One care leaver said *"I think it's [the Local Offer] brilliant, really good; I actually searched online to find out more about the Local Offer"*.



## **Futures**

Futures are a not-for-profit provider of jobs and skills advice, training, apprenticeships and support to young people and adults who need help preparing for work or training. Rated by Ofsted as Outstanding, all of their services are clear, enterprising and bespoke as stated on their website: <https://www.the-futures-group.com/what-we-do/> .

## **Catch 22**

A fully funded Department for Education initiative for young people in Nottingham, providing an individual learning and training experience while enhancing employability skills for young people aged 16 to 19-years-old. <https://www.catch-22.org.uk/services/nottingham-study-programme/> .

## **Enable**

A voluntary and Community Sector Learning and Skills Consortium serving the East Midlands and the UK. Enable is a charity which provides training, skills development and education for people who want to start or further their career. They do this through providing opportunities that address local learning, skills and employment needs. <https://enable.uk.net/> .

## **People Plus**

A leading skills and training business helping people to transform their lives and businesses through work, training, education and financial advice. They help people source and retain sustainable employment, whilst working with employers to develop work forces of the future. <https://peopleplus.co.uk/> .

## **Access Training**

Access Training provide high-quality training, apprenticeships and recruitment support to businesses and individuals throughout the Midlands. They leverage government funding to provide free or low cost support helping people to progress in work, improve productivity and enhance recruitment and retention rates. <https://www.atem.co.uk/> .

## **Social Care Complaints**

The Social Care Complaints Service facilitates the resolution of service user dissatisfaction and learns from complaints in order to improve service delivery. There is a concerted effort to ensure that our young people know how to make a complaint if they are dissatisfied with the support they receive. Regular monitoring of complaints mean trends can be identified and service improvements can be made.

## **Support Services and Partner Agencies**

We work with partner agencies external to the Authority, including:

## Independent Visitor and Advocacy Service

The Children's Society and Change Grow Live are the current advocacy and independent visitor providers for Nottingham City Council, and they provide the following to our young people:

- Advice and information for children and young people about their rights. Services include
- Independent Persons service is for all eligible children and young people subject to current Secure Accommodation Orders.
- Independent Visitor service provides suitable appointed volunteers to visit any child or young person who is in care where it is deemed to be in the child or young person's best interests. This includes children placed out of the local authority area.
- Residential Visiting Advocacy service provides visits to all residential children's homes and residential schools wherever one of our young people is placed. This includes secure accommodation.



## Governance and Monitoring Framework

The Corporate Parenting Board endorses this strategy. The Board also receives a Performance report each quarter from the Head of Children in Care and Leaving Care. Strategic Priorities (SPs) and their corresponding actions will be reviewed in response to updates of the Children in Care Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, the annual children in care and care leavers 'Have Your Say' (HYS) survey, and priorities set by central government. The next scheduled update of this strategy will take place in 2023.

The Children in Care Council (CICC) will assist in the evaluation of progress against identified priorities. The CICC are involved in analysing performance data generated by the annual HYS survey and comparing it against the previous year. Priorities for future action are then recommended.

The diagram below shows the relationship between corporate parenting forums within the Authority.



15 November 2021

## Corporate Parenting Board

<b>Title of paper:</b>	2021/2022 Q2 Performance Report Children in Care and Leaving Care <b>Period covered</b> 01.07.2021 to 30.09.2021	
<b>Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):</b>	Helen Watson – Interim Director, Children's Integrated Services	<b>Wards affected: All</b>
<b>Report author(s) and contact details:</b>	Tajinder Madahar-Head of Service Children's Duty, Children in Care, Leaving Care and Housing Aid Mary-Anne Cosgrove Head of Children in Care (Regulated Services)	
<b>Other colleagues who have provided input:</b>	Tina Thurley-Analysis and Insight	
<b>Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant)</b>		
<b>Relevant Council Plan Key Outcome:</b>		
Clean and Connected Communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Keeping Nottingham Working	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Carbon Neutral by 2028	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Safer Nottingham	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Child-Friendly Nottingham	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Healthy and Inclusive	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Keeping Nottingham Moving	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Improve the City Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Better Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial Stability	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Serving People Well	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To update the Board of the Q2 2021/22 performance data for children in care and leaving care young people.</li> <li>The Board to note progress in work with children in care and leaving care and to challenge where performance falls below our targets.</li> </ul>		
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>		
<b>1</b>	For the Board to note and challenge the performance data regarding performance relating to the Authority's work with children in care and leaving care	
<b>2</b>	Social Care will continue to monitor performance regarding dental checks to ensure this improves as Pandemic restrictions reduce, and to address any barriers	
<b>3</b>	Head of Service to work with the Virtual School to ensure any changes to the PEP for non-statutory school age children are strengthened in line with the Peer Review recommendations. A draft plan has been prepared.	

## 1 Reasons for recommendations

- 1.1 The Department for Education, in its Corporate Parenting principles states that the role that councils play in looking after children is one of the most important things they do. They further state that local authorities have a unique responsibility to the children they look after and their care leavers.
- 1.2 Corporate Parenting Board in discharging its function should be asking in adopting such an approach “**would this be good enough for my child?**” The Corporate Parenting Board is presented with performance information which shows how well we are caring for our children and are asked to challenge where performance needs to improve.

## 2 Background (including outcomes of consultation)

- 2.1 Each quarter the local authority provides information to the Corporate Parenting Board of performance against its targets. This data is provided by the Authority’s Analysis and Insight team. We measure our performance against the previous quarter, the 2020/21 outturn and comparison against our Statistical Neighbour Group.
- 2.2 **Statutory Visits- Target 95%-** Q2 has seen an improvement this quarter since Q1 rising from 80 to 83%, however there is more to do to continue to improve on this. Since March 2020, and in the Covid context, we have continued to see strong performance in visiting and this is borne out by the data we have been required to report to the DfE. We report on children and young people being seen within the preceding 4 weeks and we have been informed by the DfE that this reporting regime is to continue. This allows senior leaders to have assurance on children and young people being seen by the social worker. Delays in recording account for some discrepancy and service managers are driving on this with their team managers and social workers. For children and young people open to the children in care service, most have permanency plans in care and therefore their visiting frequency may be up to 12 weekly. There are a very few children with visiting at even less frequency. The reasons for some children not being seen are provided below:
  - Self-isolation due to Covid has impacted on some visits not taking place in timescales, these are minimal now.
  - Children and young people who are placed in stable long-term foster placements have visits agreed at 12 weekly levels.
- 2.3 We are maintaining face to face visits unless it is not appropriate to do so; some are replaced with virtual visits with agreement from service managers, guidance has been issued regarding such visits. Visits to care leavers are undertaken at 8 weekly frequencies and as at the report to the DfE 19<sup>th</sup> October 55% of young people had been seen at that frequency with detailed scrutiny of those not being seen. In respect of those not seen the service manager has detailed breakdown of the reasons for this and the steps being taken to arrange visits. Covid has had some impact with some young people refusing contact but agreed to being kept in touch through letters. A small number are missing or are out of the country.
- 2.4 **Health and Dental performance-Target 90%-** at Q2 this is at 83% which remains below where we want it to be. We have the Service Manager from the children’s duty service working to address the delay in initiation of initial health assessments when children and young people first come into care. In addition, the service managers from the children in care service and fieldwork service have also been working with health colleagues to address delays in Health assessments being requested. There are no delays in young people receiving medical attention when it has been required.
- 2.5 **Dental checks- target is 90%** and we had seen a month on month deterioration in this measure last year and at outturn 2020-21 this was at 49%. Dentists being shut during the pandemic

impacted on routine appointments, however as restrictions have lifted we are starting to see an improvement in this measure and expected this improvement to continue. We know that children have not been prevented from accessing treatment when required. There is a working group including health and social care colleagues to address this locally as the pace of improvement is not where it needs to be. We have identified some delays in recording which is being proactively driven by service managers with their team managers.

2.6 **Pathway Plan-%** Pathway Plans, authorised in the last 6months- there are two measures that we report on because there are two services responsible for the split cohort eg care leavers and (eligible) children in care. The target for this measure is 95% and Q2 performance for:

- CIC has seen a small improvement from 89 to 89.3% of children eligible for a Pathway Plan having had a plan authorised in the last 6months. These cases are held in Fieldwork, Children in care and Whole life disability services and evidences good progress
- Care leavers with a plan having been authorised has risen this quarter from 92 to 92.2%.

2.7 Pathway Plans are key to supporting children in care and care leavers prepare for independence when appropriate to do so. It is an assessment of their needs, identifies any risks and any actions required to support their next steps. We are working on improving the template used to produce the Pathway Plan to make it more user friendly, having had feedback from young people. The new template is being tested currently with a final meeting to check progress on this 26<sup>th</sup> October 2021, following which Heads of Service will consider final approval of the template before it goes live.

2.8 It remains a challenge for the update of some Pathway plans especially for those young people at university, in secure institutions or not engaging with visits, however colleagues remain tenacious in working with young people to complete or update their Pathway Plans.

## 2.9 **Personal Education Plans (PEP)**

PEP compliance

- The PEP reporting has continued to show improvement and whilst the data is only available termly the latest performance for PEPs in August was at 88%, this being a marked improvement from the status of compliance in PEPs prior to them being electronic updates
- The Virtual School are providing fortnightly reports to team managers where PEP meetings have not been scheduled to ensure these are occurring in a timely manner

2.10 **Placement Stability-% of Children in Care who have had three or more placements in the previous 12 months** has reduced over the last quarter from 7.2 to 6.6%, this is good because at outturn 2020-21 this was at 8.3% and we know our Statistical neighbour group (SNG) against whom we bench mark at outturn 2019-20 were at 11%. Our target for this measure is 9%, and therefore this indicates more children have experienced stability in their placements.

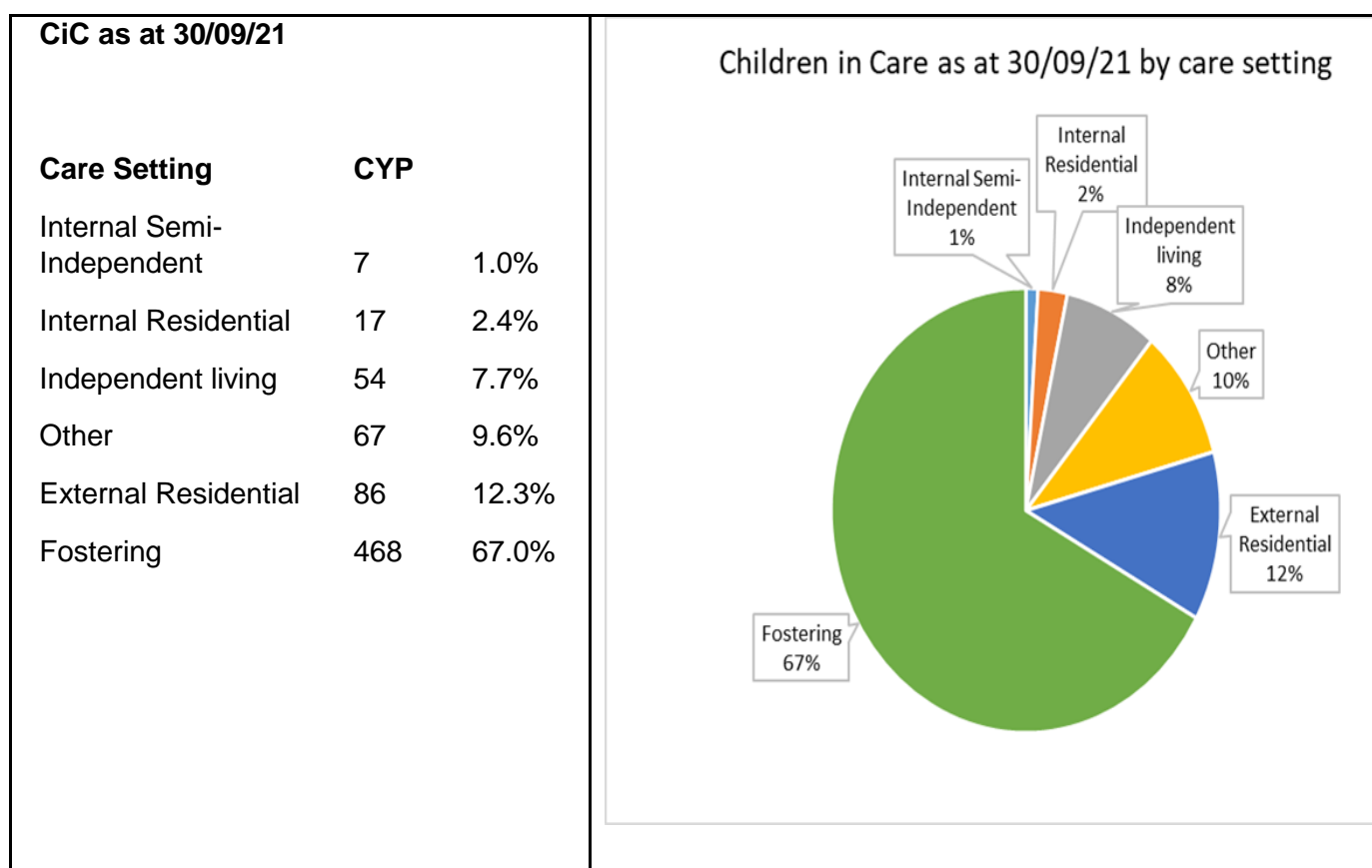
It is helpful to remind ourselves that the pandemic and a lack of placement choice can have a negative impact. A shortage of placement availability can limit choice in matching children to the most suitable placements. We have continued to offer support to foster carers both virtually and face to face to support stability. Movements for children in care are picked up by the Independent Reviewing Officer during statutory reviews.

**% Children in Care who have lived in the same placement for at least 2 years**-Our target is 70% and our performance has risen from 66.4 to 70.6% and is above 2020-21 outturn which was 69%. This further supports our view about the stability of placements. Some positive reasons for moves are:

- Children moving to adoptive placements contributes to this measure
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children can sometimes move from residential accommodation to semi-independence quicker once an assessment is undertaken of their needs and will also contribute to this measure.
- Some Young people may ask to move on to semi-independence as they approach leaving care stage rather than moving straight into independence. This is considered to be a good move in line with young people's needs and wishes.

**2.11 Type of placement**-67% of our children in care are in foster care the remainder are in other types of placements which include Residential, Independent living, semi-independent living and other categories including health placements, placed for adoption, secure accommodation or with parents.

The ratio of fostered children homed with internal: external foster carers is at 53.8%:46.2%, a slight increase on the last quarter from 53%.



**2.12 Fostered children that are in Long term fostering placements**-The Department for Education target is for 40 to 60% of children fostered to be in long term fostering placements and our performance in Q2 has risen from 27 to 28.8% which is a gradual month on month increase. A robust tracking process has been put in place setting timescales for all children and young people who have been in placement and are to remain long term fostered. The impact of this work is that children in care have a greater sense of security that they are remaining with their foster carers long term.

**2.13** We have streamlined some of our processes to secure the permanence arrangement of long term fostering for those children and young people for whom it is planned they remain with their carers long term. The Head of Service and the Service Manager continue to track progress on this work.

2.14 Of the 468 in foster care at the end of September 2021:

- 79 – 17% had a plan to return home / adoption / SGO
- A further 63 – 13% have been in care for less than 6 months. LTF as their plan is inappropriate as they have not been in care for more than 12 months.

In regards to an adjusted LTF calculation-

- Remove the 142 as above from the 468 fostering cohort = 326
- Of the 326 cohort, 127 have Long Term Fostering recorded as their exit plan – **40%**

2.15 **Children in Care numbers-** The number of children in care has continued to remain high although this quarter has seen a drop from 710 to 700 which is also a drop in our rate per 10.000 from 102.5 to 101. We have robust processes in place to agree entry into care. The increase in cost of placements has impacted on the overall cost of children in care.

2.16 We have 2 programmes; the STARS programme and a new Reunification team to support re-unification back to parents and wider families with robust packages of support. Returns home when safe to do so, allows children to be cared for by their families.

2.17 **Discharges-**During Q2, 14 children have been adopted or discharged through Special Guardianship Orders and therefore are no longer children in care, this was at 12 in the last quarter and the YTD is 26. We know there have been delays in discharges through adoption, Special Guardianship and also revocation of care orders when children are placed with parents and the local authority apply to discharge the care order. Senior leadership in children's services have escalated their concerns about court delays to the Local Family Justice Board and to CAFCASS.

2.18 We are still driving discharges through Special Guardianships which allows children to have more "normal" life experiences with wider family and friends rather than being involved in statutory social work services and the interventions in their families by social workers. Foster carers are also supported to consider Special Guardianship. The total number of children discharged from care this quarter stands at 57 and the YTD is 114.

2.19 **Children in Care Reviews-**93.5% of Children in Care statutory reviews took place in timescale during Q2, and the target is 97%. This target was previously at 95% and was raised to be more aspirational and the service are determined to continue this improvement.

2.20 Percentage of reviews where the child (excluding under 4's) participated in their review at Q2 is 93.2% which is a slight deterioration from last quarter but remains above target which is 90% and an improvement on outturn 2020-21 when it was 91.7%. The Strategic Lead for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding continues to drive on previously identified actions to improve the participation of young people in their reviews.

2.20 **Suitable accommodation/Sufficiency-**The Supported Lodgings scheme with Barnardos is now up and running with three host families approved and a further seven identified. Two young people have been matched and service is now working on identify more young people to be matched

2.21 NCC are working with the Government initiative "Place to Call Home" to recruit specific foster carers/ Hosts for Supported Lodgings for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children and young people also. One potential foster carer has been referred for assessment. We have one approved host and a further six being considered.

2.22 The block contract for a Residential Children's home is progressing well and one home is opening December 2021, and three homes have an indicative opening date of March 2022. A

new internal four bed Residential Children's home is progressing with an indicative opening date of February 2022. We have also been successful in getting Member and senior leadership support to make a bid to the DfE for match funding to develop a local residential children with complex mental health needs home, reducing the need for hospital or secure provision.

- 2.23 The block contract for Semi-Independent provision is also progressing well and on track to be open for April 2022 which will increase sufficiency for our older children to live locally.

Through closer working with Nottingham City Homes and our housing colleagues we have been able to move some care leavers onto their tenancies, freeing up in-house semi-independent provision.

## Care Leavers

- 2.24 Suitability of Accommodation and Employment, Education and Training (EET) status are key issues in the lives of care leavers. The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation (age 19-21yrs) has risen to 92.3% this quarter and takes the YTD to 91.2%. Our target is 90% which is good. Those young people in custody cannot be considered to be in suitable accommodation according to the definition we work to.
- 2.25 The percentage of care leavers in employment, education or training (age 19-21years) had seen a drop to 57.5% last quarter but this has risen this quarter to 60.1%, the target is 60%. We have implemented an Aspirations Champion Scheme to continue to support children and young people with their aspirations as well as scoping out with Barnardo's the implementation of the ASDAN Scheme which will provide certification of skills required for independence. Acknowledging the issues young people face in terms of loneliness and isolation we are also working with Barnardo's to implement a volunteer Befriender scheme to support young people in their transition. All of these schemes are launched.
- 2.26 **Fostering Service-** Recruitment activity of new foster carers is still continuing we have also had recently approved 2 carers who have transferred from IFA provision. We are in the process of securing funding for the 100 homes campaign who have over the last 3 years helped us approve over 20 new carers. We have information evenings arranged and led by the 100 homes volunteers who are committed in helping us to recruit more internal carers.
- 2.27 We continue to try to make best use of all our internal carers, many have placements and only a small number don't have children in place either because they are on hold due to health and family reasons or they are respite carers only.
- 2.28 There has been a lot of activity on cleaning up the data on duplicate carers and we continue to have weekly meetings with analysis and insight to address these issues. Supervising Social workers have had some training input on a one to one basis and this has worked well improving the data we hold. There continue to be challenges with the Business support team in prioritising completing checks in a timely manner.
- 2.29 Training for carers is still currently virtual for mandatory training apart from paediatric first aid training that needs to be completed face to face. There are still challenges with bringing training face to face in light of the current pandemic. The training programme has been put together for when face to face training can resume in the safest possible way.
- 2.30 **Residential-**Children's Residential have continued to deliver services to children throughout the pandemic. They remain rated by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding which is excellent. As the Pandemic has eased Ofsted have resumed Inspections, and we have continued to maintain virtually and physically our required Regulation 44 inspections on all of our Homes. Plans are progressing to increase the current provision to provide a further four bed home, which we hope to have open by Spring 2022.

- 3 Other options considered in making recommendations**
- 3.1 None
- 4 Finance colleague comments (including implications and value for money/VAT)**
- 4.1 None
- 5 Legal and Procurement colleague comments (including risk management issues, and legal, Crime and Disorder Act and procurement implications)**
- 5.1 None
- 6 Strategic Assets & Property colleague comments (for decision relating to all property assets and associated infrastructure) (Area Committee reports only)**
- 6.1 None
- 7 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**
- 7.1 Has the equality impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?
- An EIA is not required
- 8 List of background papers other than published works or those disclosing confidential or exempt information**
- 8.1 None
- 9 Published documents referred to in compiling this report**
- 9.1 None

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# Corporate Parenting Board

## Work Plan

### 2021 - 2022

Report (Corresponding Strategic Priority Statement)	Report Lead	Corporate Parenting Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IV Service Report</li> <li>Advocacy Service Report</li> <li>Complaints Service Report</li> <li>Independent Reviewing Officer Service Annual Report</li> <li>Children in Care Council (Verbal Update)</li> <li>Feedback from themed discussion with CiC Council – Homes and Housing</li> <li>Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy</li> <li>2021/22 - Q2 Performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CGL</li> <li>Children's Society</li> <li>Patrick Skeete</li> <li>John Matravers</li> <li>Jon Rea</li> <li>Jon Rea</li> <li>Treza Mann</li> <li>Tajinder Madahar</li> </ul>	15 November 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback from Themed Discussion with CiC Council – Health</li> <li>Health of Children in Care</li> <li>CAMH Services for Children in Care</li> <li>2021/22 – Q3 Performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jon Rea / Lead Board Members</li> <li>Kathryn Higgins / Katharine Browne</li> <li>Sharon Clarke / Matthew Jenkins</li> <li>Tajinder Madahar</li> </ul>	17 January 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	21 March 2022

### **ATTENTION: IMPORTANT NOTE ON REPORT SUBMISSION**

All reports from City Council staff for presentation to the Board **MUST** be produced and submitted through the corporate report management system, at: <http://gossweb.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/nccextranet/index.aspx?articleid=10263>.

When submitting a report for advice, you will be prompted to select reviewers.  
You should select the following reviewer:

- Sophie Russell

When submitting a report for departmental sign-off, you should select the following reviewer:

- Helen Watson

Please note that additional reports may be added to the schedule by request of the Chair or other Board Members. Reports may also be subject to schedule changes.